ABSTRACT

DANNENBERG, WILLIAM JOHN. The Ballad of the Sad Cafe. (1970) Directed by: Dr. Herman Middleton pp. 179

The objectives of this study are to analyze the script, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, historically and stylistically and to determine the kind of theatre to which it belongs, to produce the play, and to critically evaluate the play.

In the first section of this thesis, the director established the hypothesis that the script belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd. The director attempted to justify this (a) by reflecting upon the historical significance of Carson McCuller's novella and its relationship to Albee's adaptation of her work; (b) by directing attention to the environmental influences and views of Albee and others in determining the dramatic form of the play; (c) by giving detailed consideration to the stylistic significance of the script; (d) through character descriptions and analysis; (e) through setting analysis. By accomplishing these steps, the director also believes he has been capable of giving adequate justification for the choice of script and its interpretation.

The second section consists of the prompt book with the proper notations illustrating movement, composition, picturization, details of characterizations, and tempo.

These principles are further illustrated by six photographs showing key scenes.

In the third and concluding section, the director attempted to render an objective critical evaluation of the completed production. The director has (a) compared the interpretation to the final product; (b) evaluated actor-director relationships by analyzing the specific problems which occurred in working with actors; (c) evaluated the audience reaction to the production; (d) concluded with pertinent personal observations which serve to tie together the foregoing coverage.

A PRODUCTION OF THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE

BY EDWARD ALBEE

by

William John Dannenberg

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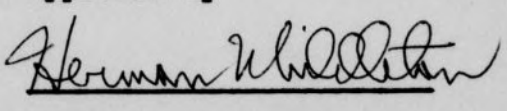

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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CHAPTER I

THE THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

The director has held a certain interest in the modern playwrights, especially those whose from and style tend to be out of the ordinary. In reviewing the list of such playwrights, Edward Albee has generated in the director an aesthetic insight and the proposition of a creative challenge.

With his play, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, some critics view Edward Albee as an impersonator of Carson McCullers, author of the novella, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, adding that McCullers is also an impersonator, for she " . . . wears the girdle of the genteel lady--Charlotte Bronte gone sour on too many chitlins and grits."[1] However, this director feels that Albee has taken the words of McCullers and used them to illustrate to the world the absurdity of existence as related to his philosophical concepts.

With this idea before him, and with this idea

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[1]Robert Brustein, "The Playwright as Impersonator," The New Republic, November 16, 1963, p. 28.

relating to the chaotic state in which the modern world finds itself, the director feels The Ballad of the Sad Cafe to be a truly representative play of the Absurdist Theatre tradition. To better understand this position, this writer will try to answer the question--what is Theatre of the Absurd?

Edward Albee asked the same question when he was told by a theatre person that, "The Theatre of the Absurd has had it; it's on its way out; it's through."[2] This statement was followed by one which considered Albee a member in good standing of the Theatre of the Absurd. Albee was deeply offended because he had never heard the term before. His immediate assumption was that it applied to the theatre on Broadway. In attempting to refute these statements and to answer the question, he said

> What . . . could be more absurd than a theatre in which the esthetic criterion is something like this: A "good" play is one which makes money; a "bad" play (in the sense of "Naughty! Naughty!" I guess) is one which does not; a theatre in which performers have plays rewritten to correspond to the public relations image of themselves; a theatre in which playwrights are encouraged to think of themselves as little cogs in a great big wheel; a theatre in which real-estate owners and theatre-party managements predetermine the success of unknown quantities; a theatre in which everybody scratches and bites for billing as though it meant success to the last bomb shelter on earth; a theatre in which, in a given season, there was not a single

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[2]Edward Albee, "Which Theatre is the Absurd one?" in The Modern American Theatre, ed. by Alvin L. Kernan (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 170.

> performance of a play by Beckett, Brecht, Chekov, Genet, Ibsen, O'Casey, Pirandello, Shaw, Strindberg--or Shakespeare? What, indeed, I thought could be more absurd than that?"[3]

On the surface the remark, "The Theatre of the Absurd has had it; it's on its way out; it's through," appears to be a rather singular attitude to be taking toward a theatre movement which has been impressing itself on the American public's consciousness. This writer's opinion is that a theatre of such plays as Samuel Beckett's Krapp's Last Tape, Jean Genet's The Balcony, Eugene Ionesco's Rhinoceros, Edward Albee's The American Dream, Fernando Arrabal's The Automobile Graveyard, Arthur Kopit's Oh Dad, Poor Dad, and Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party, has been judged by the theatre public and has not been found wanting. Fortunately for Albee and for a number of other playwrights, the Theatre of the Absurd has become a phrase to describe the philosophical attitudes and theatre methods of a number of the world's finest and most adventurous playwrights and their followers.

Although Albee does not pretend to understand the phrase entirely, he has tried to define the Theatre of the Absurd as

> an absorption-in-art on certain existentialist

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[3]Ibid., pp. 170-71.

> and post-existentialist philosophical concepts having to do, in the main, with man's attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense--which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political, and social structures man erected to "illusion" himself have collapsed.[4]

Albert Camus, in The Myth of Sissyphus, tries to identify the human situation in a world of shattered beliefs:

> A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But, in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.[5]

Eugene Ionesco states:

> Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.[6]

If one takes from a thesaurus the various synonyms for "Absurd" in order to define it, he will find such terms as foolish, senseless, trifling, ridiculous, and impossible. But, the Theatre of the Absurd does not deal in terms; its basic tenets are the ideas espoused by its playwrights.

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[4]Ibid., p. 172.

[5]Albert Camus, The Myth of Sissyphus (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), p. 18.

[6]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. xix.

The sense of metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of the human condition is the theme of the plays of Beckett, Adamov, Ionesco, Genet, Arrabal, Richardson, Koch, and Albee. But, it is not merely the subject matter that defines that called the Theatre of the Absurd. With Existentialists like Giraudoux, Anouilh, Sartre, and Camus there is a similar sense of the senselessness of life and the lack of value of ideals, purity, and purpose. It is the manner of expression that the writers of the Theatre of the Absurd employ which distinguishes and separates it from the Existentialist Theatre.

Martin Esslin states that the Existentialists

> present their sense of irrationality of the human condition in the form of highly lucid and logically constructed reasoning, while the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought. While Sartre or Camus express the new content in the old convention, the Theatre of the Absurd goes a step further in trying to achieve a unity between its basic assumptions and the form in which these are expressed.[7]

The Theatre of the Absurd no longer argues <u>about</u> the absurdity of the human condition; it merely <u>presents</u> it in being--that is, in terms of concrete stage images of the absurdity of existence. There are other elements of this Theatre of the Absurd which must be pointed up in order to gain a better understanding of this movement.

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[7]<u>Ibid</u>., pp. xix-xx.

The Theatre of the Absurd tends toward a radical devaluation of language; thus, it is part of the "anti-literary" movement of our time. In his discussion of dramatic structure, Oscar G. Brockett clarifies this:

> The dialogue of nonrealistic plays may deviate markedly from normal speech. Sometimes, everyday patterns are reduced to a mere skeleton, as in expressionistic drama where dialogue is often telegraphic in its over-simplicity. At other times, the cliches of ordinary conversation are emphasized until they become ludicrous, as in many of Ionesco's plays.[8]

The element of "pure" abstract theatre in the Theatre of the Absurd is an aspect of its anti-literary attitude, its turning away from language as an instrument for the expression of the deepest levels of meaning. Theatre is always more than mere language. Language alone can be read, but true theatre can become manifest only in performance. The theatre should aim at expressing what language is incapable of putting into words.

And so, the Theatre of the Absurd is one of the expressions of man's search for a way in which he can, with dignity, confront a universe deprived of what was once its center and its living purpose, a world deprived of a generally accepted integrating principle, which has become disjointed, purposeless-absurd. The Theatre of the Absurd forms part of the unceasing endeavor of the true artist of our time to breach the dead wall of

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[8]Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction (2nd ed., New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969), p. 39.

complacency and automatism and to re-establish an awareness of man's situation when confronted with the ultimate reality of his condition. As such, the Theatre of the Absurd fulfills a dual purpose and presents its audience with a two-fold absurdity.

In the one area, it upbraids, satirically, the absurdity of lives lived unaware and unconscious of ultimate reality. This is the feeling of the deadness and mechanical senselessness of half-unconscious lives, the feeling of human beings secreting inhumanity.[9]

In the other area, although it is vitally concerned with the ultimate realities of the human condition, the relatively few fundamental problems of life and death, isolation and communication, the Theatre of the Absurd, however grotesque, frivolous, and irreverent, represents a return to the original, religious function of the theatre--the confrontation of man with the spheres of myth and religious reality. Like ancient Greek tragedy and the medieval mystery plays and baroque allegories, the Theatre of the Absurd is intent on making its audience aware of man's precarious and mysterious position in the universe.

The Theatre of the Absurd is not concerned with the representation of events, the narration of the fate or the

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[9]Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 291.

adventures of characters, but instead with the presentation of one individual's basic situation. It is a theatre of situation as against a theatre of events in sequence, and therefore, it uses a language based on patterns of concrete images rather than argument and discursive speech. And, since it is trying to present a sense of being, it can neither investigate nor solve problems of conduct or morals.

The Theatre of the Absurd, proceeding not by intellectual concepts but by poetic images, neither poses any clear-cut solution that would be reducible to a lesson or a maxim nor provides an intellectual problem. Many of the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd have a circular structure, ending exactly as they begin; others progress merely by a growing intensification of the initial situation. And, as the Theatre of the Absurd rejects the idea that is is possible to motivate all human behavior, or that human character is based on an immutable essence, it is impossible for it to base its effect on the suspense that in other dramatic conventions springs from awaiting the solution of a dramatic equation based on the working out of a problem involving clearly defined quantities introduced in the opening secnes. In most dramatic conventions, the audience is constantly asking itself the question, "What is going to happen next?"

In the Theatre of the Absurd, the audience is confronted with actions that lack apparent motivation, characters that are in constant flux, and often happenings that are clearly outside the realm of rational experience. Here, too, the audience can ask, "What is going to happen next?" But then, anything can happen next, so that the answer to this question cannot be worked out according to the rules of ordinary probability based on motives and characterizations that will remain constant throughout the play. The relevant question is not so much what is going to happen next, but what is happening? "What does the action of the play represent?"

To summarize the movement, Martin Esslin writes:

> Ultimately, a phenomenon like the Theatre of the Absurd does not reflect despair or a return to dark irrational forces, but expresses modern man's endeavor to come to terms with the world in which he lives. It attempts to make him face up to the human condition as it really is, to free him from illusions that are bound to cause constant maladjustment and disappointment. . . . The need to confront man with the reality of his situation is greater than ever. For the dignity of man lies in his ability to face reality in all its senselessness; to accept it freely, without fear, without illusions--and to laugh at it.[10]

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[10] Ibid., p. 316.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NOVELLA

With the preceeding concepts in mind, the next step, in further justification for the selection of the script and of the idea that The Ballad of the Sad Cafe belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd, is to reflect upon the historical significance of the novella. In accomplishing this, the director will summarize the work and analyze the various concepts of theme and characters.

> The town itself is dreary. If you walk along the street on an August afternoon there is nothing whatsoever to to. . . . The town is lonesome, sad, and like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world. . . . These August afternoons when your shift is finished--there is absolutely nothing else to do; you might as well go down to the Fork Falls Road and listen to the chain gang.[11]

The tone of boredom and loneliness is established from the very first sentence. We are introduced to Miss Amelia Evans, a woman who lives all alone in a large house of which all the windows but one have been boarded up, a woman with a face

> . . . like the terrible dim faces known in

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[11]Carson McCullers, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Riverside Press, 1951), p. 3.

> dreams--sexless and white, with two gray crossed eyes which are turned inwards so sharply that they seem to be exchanging with each other one long and secret gaze of grief.12

But the house has not always been so silent; it had originally been a kind of general store, run with the iron hand of Miss Amelia herself, a grim, masculine giantess with a habit of fingering her powerful biceps absent-mindedly. The town's richest woman, she was once married to Marvin Macy, a handsome young man of dubious character whose love for her had, in the beginning, a reforming influence upon his character. But, Miss Amelia's motive in marrying had apparently been merely a desire for companionship, for when Marvin attempted to make love to her on their wedding night she repelled him furiously. Thereafter, during the brief ten days he stayed with her, she hit him whenever he came within arm's reach of her and whenever he was drunk. She finally turned him off the premises altogether. After putting under her door a letter threatening revenge, Marvin then left town, became a hardened criminal, and at last was sent to the penitentiary.

Sometime later, Miss Amelia receives a visit from a hunchedbacked dwarf, Cousin Lymon, whom she has never seen but who claims to be a distant relative. The hunchback is tubercular and inverted sexually, but Miss Amelia falls in

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[12] Ibid., p. 3.

love with him from the very first. She closes her shop the day following his arrival, giving rise to rumors among the townspeople (who were certain that she would show the door to Cousin Lymon) that she has murdered him for something he was carrying in his suitcase. Actually Miss Amelia has given herself a holiday to celebrate the beginning of a new chapter in her life, and a delegation of mill workers, who come to investigate Cousin Lymon's "death", finds him draped in a lime-green shawl and very much alive. Cheered by Miss Amelia's liquor and amused by the antics of the dwarf, who is extremely sociable, the delegation stays on, and the session is so convivial that Miss Amelia decides to start a cafe on the premises.

For six years all goes well. Miss Amelia showers favors upon Cousin Lymon; he has the best room upstairs and nothing is too good for him. Though it is apparently unreturned, her love causes a gradual transformation of character in Miss Amelia; she loses much of her old grimness and becomes in every way more amiable. Then Marvin, released from prison, returns. Miss Amelia is alarmed, for now that she has found love she is vulnerable, and she knows it. And, furthermore, her alarm is justified, for the hunchback is fascinated by Marvin. Though the latter treats him with contempt, Cousin Lymon falls in love with Marvin, thus becoming the instrument of the latter's re-

venge upon Miss Amelia. Night after night Cousin Lymon treats Marvin at the cafe, and even invites him to live with him upstairs, while Miss Amelia moves to a cot on the first floor. Miss Amelia endures all this because her love for the dwarf is large enough to include his love for Marvin, even though the latter is her deadly enemy. If she drives Marvin away, she knows Cousin Lymon will leave too, and she cannot bear the thought of that:

> Once you have lived with another it is a great torture to have to live alone . . . it is better to take in your mortal enemy than to face the terror of living alone.[13]

Cousin Lymon exploits Amelia's dependence upon him; he even mocks her publicly by imitating her walk, while Marvin looks on. One day the mutual hatred of Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy explodes in a scene which is, in a way, as ludicrous as it is terrible: a slugging match between them which is witnessed by the whole town. At the moment that she pins Marvin to the ground and is about to choke him, the hunchback alights on her back and claws at her throat, forcing her to let Marvin go. After kicking Miss Amelia senseless, Marvin, with Cousin Lymon, disappears, but not before they have destroyed Miss Amelia's still, wrecked her cafe, and stolen her private belongings. They

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[13] Ibid., p. 56.

even try to poison her, leaving on the cafe counter a plate of her favorite food heavily seasoned with poison. Thereafter Miss Amelia's hair turns gray and her eyes become increasingly crossed. For three years she waits for the hunchback to return; then, a broken woman, she hires a carpenter to board up the house and becomes a recluse. The story closes on the same note of loneliness and boredom with which it began, and there is the same ballad-like use of repetition:

> Yes, the town is dreary. On August afternoons the road is empty, white with dust, and the sky above is bright as glass. . . . There is absolutely nothing to do in the town. . . . The soul rots with boredom. You might as well go and listen to the chain gang.[14]

Spiritual isolation, universal alienation and loneliness--this is the given condition of McCuller's world. Then what follows? One facet is the effort to overcome this condition through communication through love, in spite of the premonition felt from the start that no such resolution is possible. Another facet is the anxious search for love in a loveless world and the recognition that one cannot hope--even if one wished it--to be loved, only to love, so that love is at least as much pain as it is blessing. Violence is done to the texture and feeling of McCuller's work if one abstracts the thematic core, and yet in at least

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[14] Ibid., p. 65.

one remarkable passage, itself abstract, she gives to the reader a certain sanction for this procedure. The passage occurs rather early in The Ballad of the Sad Cafe:

> First of all, love is a joint experience between two persons--but the fact that it is a joint experience does not mean that is is a similar experience to the two people involved. There are the lover and the beloved, but these two come from different countries. Often the beloved is only a stimulus for all the stored-up love which has lain quiet within the lover for a long time hitherto. And somehow every lover knows this. He feels in his soul that his love is a solitary thing. He comes to know a new strange loneliness and it is this knowledge which makes him suffer. So there is only one thing for the lover to do. He must house his love within himself as best he can; he must create for himself a whole new inward world--a world intense and strange, complete in himself. Let it be added here that this lover about whom we speak need not necessarily be a young man saving for a wedding ring--this lover can be a man, woman, child or indeed any human creature on this earth.
>
> Now, the beloved can also be of any description. The most outlandish people can be the stimulus for love. A man can be a doddering great-grandfather and still love only a strange girl he saw in the streets of Cheehaw one afternoon two decades past. The preacher may love a fallen woman. The beloved may be treacherous, greasy-headed, and given to evil habits. Yes, and the lover may see this as clearly as anyone else--but that does not affect the evolution of his love one whit. A most mediocre person can be the object of a love which is wild, extravagant, and beautiful as the poison lilies of the swamp. A good man may be the stimulus for a love both violent and debased, or a jabbering madman may bring about in the soul of someone a tender and simple idyll. Therefore, the value and quality of any love is determined solely by the lover himself.
>
> It is for this reason that most of us would rather love than be loved. Almost everyone wants to be the lover. And the curt truth is that, in a deep secret way, the state of being beloved is intolerable to many. The beloved fears and hates the lover, and with the best of reasons. For, the lover is forever trying

> to strip bare his beloved. The lover craves any possible relation with the beloved, even if this experience can cause him only pain.[15]

It is a long passage, but its quotation is justified in that it is probably the passage in which McCullers comes closest to telling explicity what concerns her most.

What she conceives to be the truth about human nature is a melancholy truth; each man is surrounded by a "zone of loneliness," serving life's sentence of solitary confinement. The only way in which he can communicate with his fellow prisoners is through love--this affords him some relief, but the relief is incomplete and temporary since love is seldom a completely mutual experience and is also subject to time, diminishing with the "death" of the loved one. In Ballad, McCullers has demonstrated that no love is actually reciprocal and also that in most cases the beloved actually fears and hates the lover. A flaw thus exists in the very nature of love, and frustration is the lot of man.

These are not popular ideas. They do not flatter the reader. They are uncomfortable to live with. There is a reluctance to acknowledge that they may correspond to reality--yet this very reluctance amy be evidence that they do.

The second reason McCullers has suffered unfavorable criticism is her choice of characters and situations. The

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[15] Ibid., pp. 23-25.

fact must be admitted that her characters are not always the kind one is likely to encounter in ordinary experience, and that the situations in which she places them are frequently uncommon, even implausible. But, there is a reason for this, and a good one. Carson McCuller's theme is spiritual isolation, and it should be obvious that any kind of deviation, physical or psychological, increases this sense of isolation.

Robert S. Phillips has provided a provocatively logical theory tangent to McCuller's characters. The Freudian concepts are most apparent in this theory as Phillips almost graphically illustrates.

> Her [Miss Amelia] father had been the only man she admired, and his death left her shaken and insecure. The day he dies, she found a big acorn and saved it as a talisman of the dreadful day. In addition to the nut, Miss Amelia had kept her two removed gallstones, which she frequently fondles. This gesture suggests Amelia's subconscious desire to possess male genitals as well as her masculine personality traits; it is the first of two symbolic acts which are keys to her character.[16]

Phillips continues with the theory, pointing out how Miss Amelia has symbolically emasculated Cousin Lymon by adorning him with "a shawl of lime-green wool, the fringes of which almost touch the floor."[17] This act, according to Phillips, is a demonstration of Miss Amelia's desire to be male in a psychological sense.

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[16]Robert S. Phillips, "Painful Love--Carson McCuller's Parable," Southwest Review, Winter, 1966, pp. 80-81.

[17]Ibid., p. 81.

This idea can be seen that the physical appearance of Lymon and Amelia is symbolic of their psychological inversion. Amelia feels compelled to be the aggressor, and quite literally wears the pants in the family; Lymon is homosexual and will have nothing to do with a feminine female. McCullers makes it evident that a "normal" love affair between the pair is unthinkable, and in all probability physically impossible, with the handicap of Amelia's height and Lymon's twisted, humped back. In addition, the reader is informed that there is a possibility they are blood relations. Amelia can love Lymon only because she does not have to submit to his advances. Indeed, since Lymon is a homosexual in love with Marvin, his advances to her are never forthcoming.

If one readily accepts the Freudian theory, then he must accept the fact that The Ballad of the Sad Cafe revolves about the interplay between the active and the passive participants, with normal characteristics of the male and the female inverted. The one time that Lymon performs a positive act is when he leaps on Amelia's back to make her lose the fight she is waging with Marvin Macy. This entire scene is an inversion: the female wrestling with the male over the love of a beloved, also a male, who stands cowering in the corner like a Victorian heroine, pale and wan. Lymon's tenacious hold on Amelia's back is in itself a symbolic inversion of the normal sexual

position of male and female.

There are other symbols in Ballad that need to be mentioned. In this story the cafe, while serving as the symbol of a little world that is the epitome of the larger universe, serves also as a refuge and a solace for the townspeople--a place of good cheer. It is a kind of bulwark against the impersonal and the inimical; it is a fortress against loneliness and disorder, symbolized by the darkness outside.

Another conspicious case in point of symbolism is the fact that after the departure of Cousin Lymon and Marvin Macy, Miss Amelia's eyes become increasingly crossed "as though they sought each other out to exchange a little glance of grief and lonely recognition."[18] The physical defect becomes more pronounced as the isolation which it symbolizes increases.

If her situations sometimes have an artificial, stylized quality, it is because they have been contrived deliberately to illustrate a thesis, not to imitate situations in real life. Thus, McCuller's notion that "the most outlandish people can be the stimulus for love; the value and quality of any love is determined by the lover himself"[19] is illustrated by Miss Amelia's love for

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[18]McCullers, Ballad, p. 64.

[19]Supra, n. 15, p. 24.

Cousin Lymon. Since frustration is a constant theme, and since of all frustrations, frustrated love is the most painful, McCullers prefers situations that lead inevitably to disappointment in love: love, the attempt at ideal communication, is usually unreturned, unrecognized, mistaken for its opposite, or made difficult if not impossible by social and sometimes even biological considerations.

Carson McCullers has made her characters unique for a purpose: their eccentricities are the badges of their isolation, and prove her point that even the most grotesque individual can be the object of a love that is "wild, extravagant, and beautiful as the poison lilies of the swamp."[20] In The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, the abnormal is used symbolically to dramatize what is true of universality than one which treats of the abnormal as such.

While noting McCuller's talent for realism and for creating strange and unusual characters, V. S. Pritchett perceived very clearly that it was neither of these which gave to McCuller's work its peculiar power and distinction:

> It may be objected that the very strangeness of the characters in a story like The Ballad of the Sad Cafe is that of regional gossip and, in fact, turns these characters into minor figures from some American Powsyland. They become the bywords of a local ballad.

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[20] Ibid.

> But the compassion of the author gives them their moment at which they become "great." A more exact definition of the range of her genius would be to say that human destiny is watched by her in the heart alone.[21]

There is a terrible finality about the vision of life which McCullers projected in The Ballad of the Sad Cafe: an external flaw exists in the machinery of love, which alone has the power to liberate man from his fate of spiritual isolation. There is no escape, and no hope of escape--one might as well go and listen to the chain gang. With this particualr theme McCullers had done all that she could possibly do--all perhaps, that could possibly be done, for the pattern is a closed one, and no other American writer had embroidered it nearly so fully nor so perfectly.

Of all of Carson McCuller's writings, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe has elicited the greatest praise. Critics as diverse as Tennessee Williams, Mark Schorer, Ihah Hassan, Louis Rubin, and Irving Howe, who called it 'one of the finest novels ever written by an American'[22] have preferred it over all her other works. A young man with theatrical ambitions read it and conceived the idea of some day adapting it for the stage: his name was Edward Albee, and the idea became a reality.

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[21]V. S. Pritchett, The New Statesman and Nation, August 2, 1959, p. 137.

[22]Oliver Evans, The Ballad of Carson McCullers (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1966), p. 142.

CHAPTER III

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND HIS SCRIPT

Condemned by some and worshipped by others, Edward Albee is clearly the most compelling American playwright to explode upon the Broadway stage since Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller in the mid-'40s. Since 1960, off-Broadway has spawned a fiercely talented crop of young American playwrights including Jack Richardson, Jack Gelber, Arthur Kopit, and, most important, Albee.

The four have all been called members of the Theatre of the Absurd,[23] a grab-bag grouping which encompasses almost every gifted modern playwright in the world. However, the four reject the community title.

Their literary exemplars are not so much Camus and Sartre--who treated the Absurd with stark seriousness--as Ring Lardner and James Thurber. The young American playwrights share what Albee admires in Thurber:

> . . . a sense of the ridiculous, a knowledge that the sentences people make half the time bear absolutely no resemblance to what the people think.[24]

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[23]"Albee: Odd Man In On Broadway," Newsweek, February 4, 1963, pp. 49-50.

[24]Ibid.

In his Gallows Humor, Richardson found humor in execution. Gelber, who dealt seriously with dope addiction in The Connection, laughed at bigotry in The Apple. Kopit, in Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mama's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad, made fun of man-eating mothers. In most of their work--and in all of Albee's--one suddenly stops in the middle of a laugh, wonders, "Why am I laughing at this?" and goes right on laughing.

With Virginia Woolf Albee soared ahead of his rivals. He is the first to sustain a new brand of comedy (serious) for a full three acts on Broadway. Already called the new O'Neill, the young Strindberg, and, inevitably, the Northern Williams, his admirers grow. In fact, Williams himself is Albee's most ardent admirer. 'Edward Albee' says Williams unblushingly, 'is the only great playwright we've had in America.'[25]

Albee's life as a playwright began with The Zoo Story, a one-hour dialogue in which a wanderer named Jerry desperately and mercilessly inflicts himself and his experiences upon a solitary bench-sitter. Then came The Death of Bessie Smith, the least personal of Albee's plays. While a Negro blues singer bleeds to death outside a white hospital, a nurse, an intern, and an orderly stand apart, baring and comparing their own frustrations. In The Sandbox, Mommy and

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[25]Ibid.

Daddy dispose of aging Grandma by putting her in a sandbox to bury herself. His one-act work, The American Dream, is an American nightmare; Mommy barks and Daddy obeys, Grandma is hauled away, and a child is dismembered by its parents. What transforms these plays from simple horrors into works of art is not only Albee's humor, but his lyricism, and needle-sharp dialogue. In all his plays he feels almost a mystical urgenty to rip away illustions, yet he, himself, is widely reputed to be a mysterious number.

Today, Albee looks more like a prepschool boy than a powerful playwright. He is, like many of his characters, a well-put-together young man, 5 feet 11 inches tall, neat, addicted to tweedy sports jackets.

Albee now lives comfortably in a sunny, five-room Greenwich Village apartment. As a child he lived luxuriously. Born in Washington, D. C., on March 12, 1928, he was adopted at the age of two weeks by Reed and Frances Albee. The father was the millionaire scion of the Keith-Albee chain of theatres, the mother a former Bergdorf mannequin. Except for winters in Palm Beach and three years in a Manhattan apartment in the Park Lane Hotel, the three Albees lived in a gloomy mansion in Larchmont. Reed Albee, who died in 1961, was a meek man, and Edward's friends remember him largely for his grunts and grumbles. He is the model for Daddy in The American Dream.

Frances Albee, who now lives in White Plains, is a tall, imperious suburban club lady. She is the model for Mommy in The American Dream. She and her son rarely see each other, and he does not know whether she has seen any of his plays.

Grandma Cotta, Mrs. Albee's mother, was a permanent floating visitor. She is Grandma in The Sandbox and The American Dream.

As a child, Albee had everything except understanding. He was pampered endlessly. He had nannies and tutors, and he had thousands of expensive toy soldiers.

Albee feels he was both happy and unhappy as a child, that he felt no resentment toward his adopted parents but that he deeply resented his natural parents for abandoning him. This feeling is reflected in most of his plays. In fact, one interpretation of Virginia Woolf is that it is about parents killing their children--and about children killing their parents.

He began writing poems as 6. At the age of 12, he was shipped off from Rye Country Day School, where he had been an indifferent student, to Lawrenceville, where he became a terrible student. He was expelled after two and a half years for refusing to go to classes, and was banished to Valley Forge Military Academy.

Albee hated Valley Forge--so much that he was sick most of the time. The next stop was Choate. Here he

found his first home.

After graduating from Choate, Albee went on to Trinity College, where he tried acting, and cut classes so often that he was thrown out after three semesters.

When his paternal grandmother died, she left him $100,000. He did not receive the principal until he became 30, but upon reaching 21, he began receiving the interest--$50 a week. He quit his home and his education and moved to New York.

Then came the succession of odd jobs which seems indispensible for every American writer. Albee worked as an office boy, and sold records at Bloomingdale's and books at Gimbels. For two years, from the age of 26, he ran telegrams for Western Union.

Throughout this frustrating period, Albee tried to write--poems, plays, and a novel. Nothing of consequence was produced. Two months before his 30th birthday, Albee found something. Depressed, desperate, he sat down at his typewriter, and on long beige-colored paper taken from Western Union, he pounded out The Zoo Story in two weeks. After the play opened, Albee churned out his three other one-act plays. Then in 1961, he began thinking about Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Albee works by intuition. He thinks of a situation

(in Virginia Woolf, the exorcism of the child) and of the characters.

> I try to turn off anything except the reality of the characters in the situation. I like to exclude the symbolism. I don't plan ahead--saying this is going to represent that.[26]

For about six months, Albee walks around with a headful of characters, thinking about the play.

> The structure and the characters are pretty well established when I go to the typewriter. I have the characters improvise dialogue in my mind. I put them in a situation outside the play. I like to pretend I'm giving them free rein. I exercise some discipline so that they don't fall all over the place.[27]

Critics Comment on The Ballad

Paradoxically, Edward Albee has not received the positive reveiws for the play, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe that were afforded to Carson McCuller's novella. Instead, there have been diverse criticisms.

> A reviewer can venture only one comment on Edward Albee's play at the Martin Beck with a feeling of certainty. It is a drama that will grip your attention and emotionally involve you in the ordeal of queer people snared by life in a strange kind of love. The rest is a puzzlement.[28]

> Albee has . . . filled out certain elements of the novel. . . . He has made a great many things more explicit than Miss McCullers needed to do, with the result that while most of his invented scenes work in themselves, they tend to hack away at the resonant

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[26] Ibid. [27] Ibid.

[28] America, January 4, 1964, p. 26.

mystery of her book. Leaving nothing to chance, Albee has left almost nothing to the imagination.[29]

It is all acceptably grotesque, moderately provocative, and not very satisfying. Edward Albee's ear for the dialogue of Miss McCuller's South seems less than well developed and his feeling for a play realistic in tone and technique less than sharp.[30]

Probably the most caustic criticism is given by Robert Brustein in The New Republic:[31]

By the time of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, Albee's gifts for mimicry were so advanced and his models (Strindberg and O'Neill) so elevated, that he produced an ersat masterpiece. . . . His latest play shows him still to be imitating--and imitating now an inferior writer. In The Ballad of the Sad Cafe, even Mr. Albee's capacity for impersonation seems to have failed him; and the result is a trivial and tedious play.

Brustein accuses the play of being

. . . a mannerist play without the slightest hint of manner; a work in the Southern decadent tradition by a writer who apparently has never set foot in the South.

He takes issue with Albee's use of Southern diction indicating displeasure with the telegraphic manner in which the dialogue is written. He illustrates this by questioning Albee's use of the verb to be.

. . . I be [sic] totally unable to grasp the principle behind the author's use of the verb to be, which is invariably either omitted from the sentence

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[29]Richard Gillman, "The Stage--Albee's Sad 'Ballad'," The Commonweal, November 22, 1963, p. 256.

[30]Barry Ulanov, The Catholic World, November 11, 1963, p. 264.

[31]Brustein, The New Republic, pp. 28-29.

> or left uninflected--this is the kind of underwater language one expects to see bubbling from the lips of skin divers.

Brustein further charges that Albee has both "under- and over-written" the play. He attempts to confirm this impression by an illustration of the plot.

> Concerned with a conventional love triangle, it tries to rescue itself from utter banality by offering us a trio of grotesques. 'The most outlandish people,' gargles the narrator, 'can be the stimulus for love.' I suppose this is true enough, but their outlandishness does not make them any less shallow than heterosexual stage lovers; and since Albee neglects to motivate this ripartite romance, or to dramatize the emotions of love and hatred, they are not even very credible. . . . The author proceeds to pad this skeleton with a bunch of stereotyped neighbors clacking their tongues, with a series of bewildering flashbacks within flashbacks, [and] with the endless babbling of the narrator.

The fact is quite apparent that Brustein does not like Albee, nor does he favor McCullers. But the fact that Brustein accuses Albee of being a non-traditionalists; of the slanderous use of language by Albee; of the lack of motivation for the lovers--all promote and reinforce this writer's feeling that the play belongs to the Absurdist Theatre.

The Ballad of the Sad Cafe is not a play of local color. Though specific, its "Southern" decadence is symbolic. The theme is the frustration of love in a world without horizon or human dimension; a world so bound in its isolation that all who dwell in it become deformed. The hunchback of the play is the evil which emerges from

this constricted world. All the characters are monsters of one kind or another. This evil is also love when love has no natural outlet, no soil to give it nurture. It is a twisted love which forces its way to the light in wild contortion.

The better people (embodied in this instance by the lonely, gentle Henry Macy) are passive, mute, defeated and hardly perceptible amid the rank growth. The others are mean little dwarfs or misbegotten giants who are filled with an obscene energy that dare not pronounce the word love, though active with its awkward gestures and an irrepressible, infantile tenderness. Where there is sufficient power the only directed impulse is greed, the only satisfaction, acquisition. The result is always destruction. What ties these people together even while it separates them is a loneliness that is unaware of its name.

The tone of Carson McCuller's new writing--some of it spoken by the narrator of the play--is spare and almost flat, musical only through a mournfulness and ache that rise to something like nobility by its lack of "eloquence." She avoids explanation. Her story is not 'psychological", she dreamed it without trying to understand it. The narration bears a blank countenance as if its import will either be self-evident or unintelligible--in which case the listener may be rendered obtuse by the

rattle of commonplace reason.

The tale is plainly told as an event, horrid without being astonishing, a nightmare which, like the environment in which it is set, remains a perennial norm. One cannot think of this as realism. That is one reason why the novella and the play have so little "talk." The play must perforce supply dialogue to create a story line, though Albee, through his narrator, supplies background and comment from the original source to circumvent the pitfalls of prosy exposition.

Albee's greatest success for sheer writing is the letter which is momentarily mentioned in McCullers, but which in the play, becomes a seering expression of love-hate, a wrath arising from the lover's inability to affect or touch the beloved except in violence. This, in addition to the bitterness of his comedy, constitutes the mainspring of Albee's talent. He is superb as a dramatic craftsman, as is sufficiently proved by his treatment of this, theatrically speaking, nearly impossible material.

Application of the Absurdist Philosophy to The Ballad

With the philosophy of Absurdist Theatre briefly pursued, and with the also brief analysis of Carson McCullers and her novella, this writer feels the time is right to reveal which tenets of the Absurdist tradition can be applied

to Edward Albee's play. In order to make this revelation as clear as possible, this writer will extract these ideas from the previous discussion and show the comparison of each with the play and with this director's interpretation.

The Theatre of the Absurd presents the absurdity of the human condition in terms of concrete stage images.-- Albee has been most precise in insuring that the absurdity of the human condition and the absurdity of its existence is merely presented and not argued about. How impossible is the love of a very sexually potent scoundred for a sexless, domineering woman, who holds love for a repulsive, hunchbacked, homosexual dwarf, who holds love for the very sexually potent scoundrel? There can only be invoked a very positive and concrete image of the impossibility (a symonym for absurd) of the situation. This love is not argued about; it is not told through discursive thought; it is merely presented in being. Furthermore, the setting, although abstract in its design and construction, promotes a strong feeling of the decay apparent in the lives of the people and the town.

The Theatre of the Absurd tends toward a radical devaluation of language.-- This writer believes the fact to be quite apparent that Albee has deviated markedly from normal speech. He has, for the most part, reduced everyday patterns of speech to mere skeletons. This idea is

most revealing in his frequent use of the phrase, "I be".

The Theatre of the Absurd upbraids, satirically, the absurdity of lives lived unaware and unconscious of ultimate reality.-- One has only to read the proposal scene and see how completely unaware and unconscious Miss Amelia reacts to the love expressed to her my Marvin Macy. Moreover, Marvin's love letter to Miss Amelia becomes one of the most tragic-comic elements of the play. No greater revelation can be made to show the unconscious wrath which rises from his inability to influence or touch his beloved.

The Theatre of the Absurd is concerned with the presentation of one individual's basic situation.-- Albee was very distinct in solififying this point. Ballad does not narrate the fate or the adventures of characters; it presents the situation of Miss Amelia. Here is a basic ugly woman, possessed with the desire for material gains. She rejects the one who would love her, loves the one who uses her, and is destroyed by the love of the beloved for the rejected. The writer believes that such evidence will illustrate the fact that Albee has created a situation and not merely a succession of events.

Many of the plays of the Theatre of the Absurd have a circular structure, ending exactly as they began.-- This idea may be seen in Ballad. Not only is the idea present in the opening and ending monologue of the narrator, but also in the situation as presented by the playwright. The

Narrator opens the play with his introduction to the dismal town and to Miss Amelia, the recluse. Everything that will happen in the play has already happened. Through a series of flashbacks, the audience sees the situation as it developed and is returned to the present--the end of the play. Thus, the circular structure is complete.

In the Theatre of the Absurd, the audience is confronted with actions that lack apparent motivation, characters that are in constant flux, and often happenings that are clearly outside the realm of rational experience.-- The question most frequently asked by those familiar with the play concerns the uncomprehensible reason for Miss Amelia's marriage to Marvin. Albee never gives motivation for this action. The writer can only conjecture that it was merely for companionship. However, by not applying a motivated reason for this action, the playwright has heightened the senseless position taken by man in trying to make sense out of his senseless world.

Albee has placed greater emphasis on this idea by the brutal fight between Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy. What could be more irrational in the experience of normal beings than this?

In completing this principle of the Absurdist tradition, the director has promoted the constant flux in the characters by giving the characters animal movements. At one moment they are real human beings; at another, they

return to the spheres of myth and religious reality, espousing the ancient belief of totemism, that is, an animal considered as being related by blood to a given family and taken as its symbol. This idea of flux is also noted in the major characters. There is a constant change in the love and hate of Marvin Macy. Cousin Lymon, too, generates this change in his beginning meek attitude towards Miss Amelia which changes to one of evil. But with all his evil, there remains within him the deep and unfilled love for Marvin. Probably the most constant change occurs with Miss Amelia. Here one sees the change from greed to good-natured joshing; to love; to hate; finally, to complete degeneration. This writer feels that Edward Albee has quite successfully adapted the novella by Carson McCullers to the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Interpretation and Setting

In adapting Carson McCuller's The Ballad of the Sad Cafe to the stage, this director feels that Albee had little to contend with in the development of characters. It was just a matter of writing the dialogue to coincide with the characters so finely wrought by McCullers and to show their attempts to make sense out of their senseless position in a world which makes no sense.

And just as the characters were drawn for Edward Albee by McCullers, so were they also drawn for this director

by Albee. Although the psychological background is felt to be important in the understanding of the characters by the actors, the director has not relied upon this factor too heavily in the interpretation of the characters or the script.

The director does not believe the play to be realistic. The title gives a clue to its artistic form. It is a ballad and that in itself eliminates the sense of reality. Therefore, the director has interpreted the style as being far removed from reality--the style known as theatricalism.

Yet, pure theatricalism is not totally present. Throughout the presentation, the audience will see sketches of the realistic continuum--realism, symbolism, expressionism. Perhaps the better word to describe the interpretation of style would be eclecticism--selection of what appears to be the best in various styles.

One of the primary factors used to determine the style was the dramatic metaphor chosen to represent the whole essence of the production. Fortunately, the director hadn't far to search. Within the opening dialogue was the perfect metaphor.

> The town is lonesome--sad--like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world.[32]

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[32]Edward Albee, The Ballad of the Sad Cafe (New York: Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 1963), p. 5.

With this in mind, the director felt it necessary to achieve a sense of isolation in space. To do this, the designer employed the entire width of the stage (90 feet) with black velour drapes covering the sides. A white cyclorame stretched the width of the upstage, and directly in front of this a white scrim was hung.

In the center and downstage was constructed a plastic set (plastic in the sense of being three-dimensional) measuring 28 feet wide by 16 feet deep and mounted on a platform that was six inches high. On this platform were constructed five separate smaller unit pieces. Three were placed left, center, and right, ranging in height from not greater than 24 inches upon which the actors could play and which were later representative of the tables and chairs in the cafe.

Up left on the platform was a fourth unit, three feet high, six feet long, and eighteen inches wide, which represented the counter and the office of Miss Amelia. On the upstage center of the platform was the fifth unit. This was a set of stairs leading up to a three-foot high landing. Extending up and downstage from the right side of the landing was a second set of stairs. These led to the upper rooms of the cafe. The "upper rooms" was a platform supported by beams and dead-hung cables. Attached to the front cables and allowed to open were two eight-foot shutters which gave the appearance of two sad eyes.

Very little of the set pieces were faced. The designer felt that by leaving the construction semi-opened and allowing the lighting of the cyclorama to be seen, a greater sense of isolation would be achieved.

In front of the down right side of the six inch platform and extending around the side was a porch. Down left on the porch was a single porch post.

Full use of the three-dimensionsl effect of light and shadow was employed to further create the mood of isolation and loneliness.

A minimum of props was used because of the lack of available space to hide them. However, those that were employed were very real and functional.

Character Analysis

The greatest problem that the director had to contend with, and one that was paramount in the development of the style, was the casting of the production. Because there was no six foot giantess nor a dwarf to illustrate the character distortion, the director decided to eliminate the external distortion of the characters in these respects and try to promote the evocation of internal distortion.

With the exception of a hunch for Cousin Lymon's back the director relied upon the natural physical smallness of the actor who was to play this role and upon the tubercular affliction of the character. Greater dimension

of smallness was added to the actor by using an over-sized piece of luggage instead of the small tin suitcase as called for in the script and by the use of a very large shawl which the actor used later. The homosexuality of the dwarf was subdued as far as action was concerned in the opening scenes, but build up to the obvious as the play progressed.

Cousin Lymon has within him all the qualities of Everyman. There is good and evil, joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure. He is at times almost elfish--childlike. There is an ingratiating quality about him and he uses it! He is always in control of those about him--always demanding--always receiving. And yet, he has a great capacity for love and to love. Unfortunately, it is a perverted love and one that lacks fulfillment. It is by destroying the one that loves him that he reaches any relationship with his beloved.

Fortunately, because of the chosen style, the character of Miss Amelia was not too difficult to cast. Although both McCullers and Albee used a giant of a woman, the director did not feel it necessary. Since an evocation of domination was the feeling to be demonstrated in this character, the director relied upon the inner motivations of the character in conjunction with the dialogue to emulate this.

Miss Amelia is, if anything, sexless, although she

does possess strong masculine tendences. After the death of the only man she ever loved, her father, she became ruthless in her business dealings with the town. But, paradoxically, there is a kindness and unspoken generosity in her as deomonstrated by her refusal to accept money for curing the people of their afflictions. As a doctor, she is highly imaginative, conjuring up all sorts of exotic cures. This imagination is further brought out by her unwillingness (or inability) to converse on factual matters. Instead, she would rather talk about such things as the number of stars in the sky.

Within her, as within the others, is a terrible yearning to love and be loved. Her marriage to Marvin Macy was not generated out of love; it came from her desire for companionship. Not until Cousin Lymon appears does she find her love. But the beloved will not return this love. There is constantly about her an aura of sadness, of loneliness--yes, and ugliness, but this ugliness comes from the pain and suffering of losing that which once was beautiful.

And the cause of that loss was Marvin Macy. Marvin Macy is the handsomest man in the region--hard-muscled and virile. Financially, he is very comfortable, for his job as a loom-fixer pays good wages. He is never one to bow and scrape to others and he always gets just what he wants.

But Marvin is not a person to be envied. for he is an evil character. His reputation is as bad, if not worse, than that of any young man in the country. Yet in spite of his well-known reputation, he is the beloved of many females in the region--girls whom he degrades and shames.

However, after Marvin chooses Miss Amelia as his bride-to-be, solely out of love, he reforms his character. He is good to his brother and foster mother, and he saves his money and learns to be thrifty. Moreover, he reaches out toward God. No longer does he lie around on the floor of the front porch playing his guitar and singing; he attends church services and is present at all the religious meetings. He learns good manners and he quits swearing and fighting. For two years he passes through this transformation. At the end of two years, he asks Miss Amelia to marry him. The marriage lasts only ten days. Because Miss Amelia will not--cannot--return his love, everything that was vile and evil prior to the two-year transformation is regenerated a hundred times greater. By the end of the play, Marvin's character is reduced to one of animal instincts--reduced by Miss Amelia, the beloved.

All of this terrible triangle of perverted love is seen by Henry Macy, Marvin's older brother. Henry is a shy and timid person with gentle manners; a good soul touched by the sordid plight of humanity. He lends his

wages to those who are unfortunate. In the old days, he used to care for the children whose parents were at the cafe on Saturday night. He is a shy man, and he has the look of one who has a swollen heart and suffers. It is like the heart of a child which has festered and swollen until it is a misery to carry within the body, easily chafed and hurt by the most ordinary things.

In an effort to synthesize the supporting characters into an ensemble, the director took the title from Albee's The Zoo Story and gave each actor an animal to portray. Emma Hale becomes a snake--sly, smug, hypnotic in her relationship with the others, striking out at the opportune time. Mrs. Peterson is a Chihuahua dog, yapping, nervous, hiding behind the rattles of Emma. The monkeys in the zoo are the Rainey boys, mischief-makers who tease and mimic but whose actions cannot really be condemned.

Of all the supporting roles, the most unlikely character, but one capable of perceiving the inner feelings of Miss Amelia, is Merlie Ryan--old crazy Merlie Ryan. It is he who is duped into accusing Miss Amelia of murdering Cousin Lymon. This brings the townspeople into the store and opens the cafe. It is he who first perceives Amelia's love for Lymon, and the terrible conflict that will arise between Amelia and Marvin.

Merlie's animal character was the most difficult

of all to "see." Neither the director nor the actor could visualize an animal that externally appeared grotesque and ludicrous, yet one that internally was perceptive. After experiencing much research and experimentation, the actor and the director found the animal--the opossum.

The remainder of the menagerie is a collection of a clacking hen, a cow with a tremendous swinging udder, a pair of mixed-breed farm collies, and a bitch in heat followed by her mongrel lover. All of their movements into and out of the cafe are broad and exaggerated, as though they are escaping back into the familiarity of their cages. This movement is another device employed by the director to further disencumber the production from the clothes of realism.

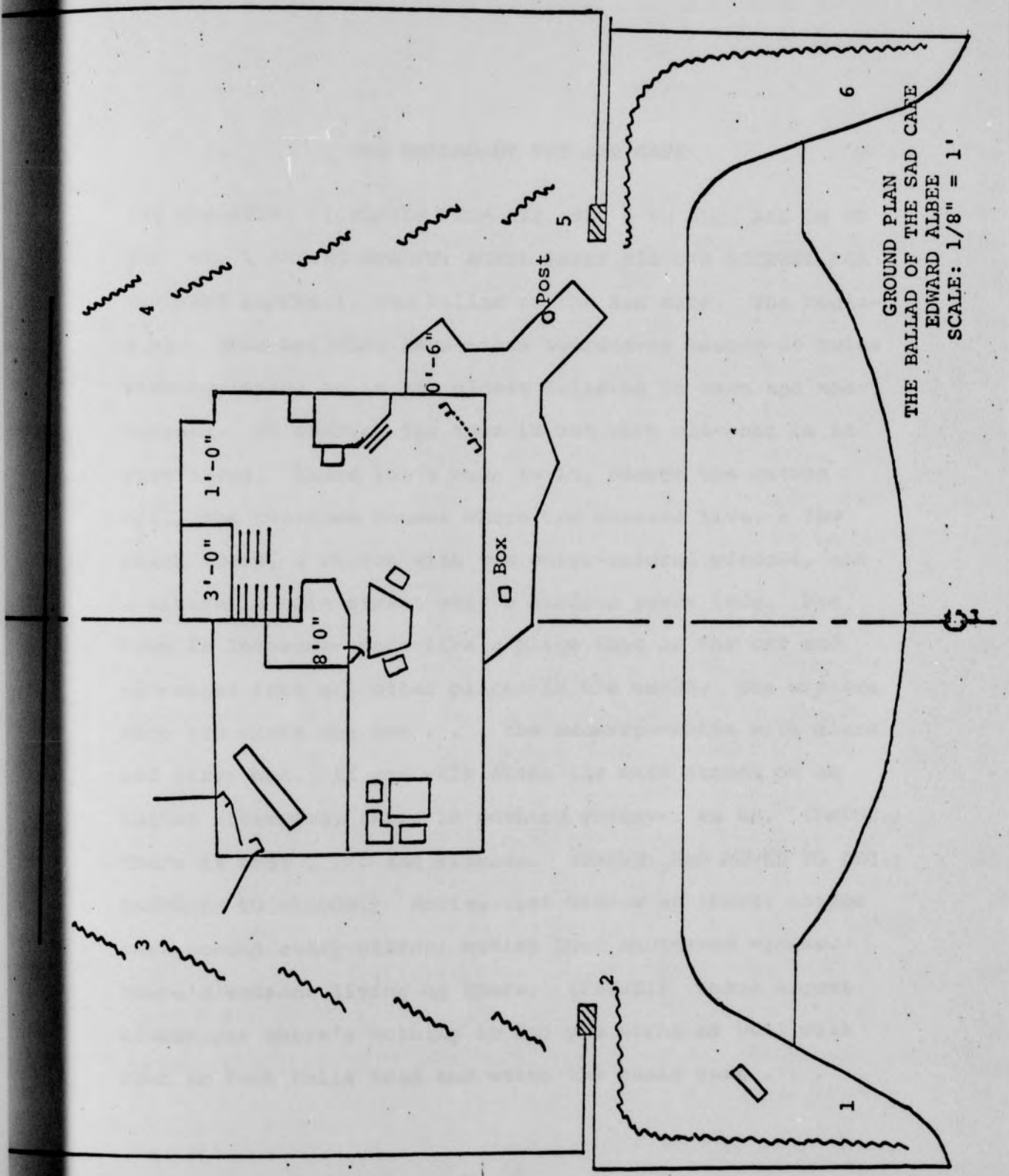
Summary

The director has attempted to establish the idea that Albee's The Ballad of the Sad Cafe is a non-realistic theatre piece. Further establishment of this idea has been continued by placing the play in the Absurdist tradition, by reflecting upon the historical significance of Carson McCuller's novella and its relationship to Albee's adaptation of her work, by directing attention to the environmental influences and views of Albee and others in order to determine the dramatic form of his work, and by giving consideration to the stylistic significance of the production.

Further justification of the non-realistic idea has been given through character analysis and description and through set description as the primary means of establishing mood.

Thus the director feels The Ballad of the Sad Cafe is a truly representative play of the Absurdist tradition and one which graphically illustrates the absurdity of existence. It is an absorption in art--an absorption with man's attempts to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense because all the structures man has erected to illusion himself have collapsed.

PART II. THE PROMPT BOOK


GROUND PLAN
THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE
EDWARD ALBEE
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'
1
2
3
4
5
6
Post
Box
1'-0"
3'-0"
8'0"
0'-6"
CL

THE NARRATOR. (CROSSES FROM EXT. SL. 6 TO DLC. AND ON TO EXT. SR. 1 DURING SPEECH: ACTOR TAKES HIS OWN LICENSE FOR MOVEMENT ACROSS.) The Ballad of the Sad Cafe. The beginning. This building here--this boarded-up house--is twice cistinguished; it is the oldest building in town and the largest. Of course, the town is not very old--nor is it very large. There isn't much to it, except the cotton mill, the two-room houses where the workers live, a few peach trees, a church with two water-colored windows, and a miserable main street only a hundred yards long. The town is lonesome--sad--like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world. The winters here are short and raw . . . the summers--white with glare and firey hot. If you walk along the main street on an August afternoon, there is nothing whatever to do. (PAUSE.) There is heat . . . and silence. (PAUSE: HAS MOVED TO DRC.: GESTURES TO WINDOW.) Notice that window up there; notice that second story window; notice that shuttered window. There's someone living up there. (PAUSE.) These August afternoons there's nothing to do; you might as well walk down to Fork Falls Road and watch the chain gang . . .

listen to the men sing. Though . . . (THE UPSTAIRS WINDOW SLOWLY OPENS AND MISS AMELIA'S APPEARANCE AT THE WINDOW IS DESCRIBED AS IT OCCURS.) . . . look now; watch the window. (PAUSE.) Sometimes, in the late afternoon, when the heat is at its worst, a hand will slowly open the shutter there, and a face will look down at the town . . . a terrible dim face . . . like the faces known in dreams. [Figure 1.] The face will linger at the window for an hour or so, (SILENCE FOR A MOMENT OR TWO, THEN THE SHUTTERS ARE SLOWLY CLOSED.) . . . then the shutters will be closed once more, and as likely as not there will not be another soul to be seen along the main street. But once . . . once, this building--this boarded-up house--was a cafe. Oh, there were tables with paper napkins, colored streamers hanging from the lamps, and great gatherings on Saturday nights. It was the center of the town! And this cafe . . . this cafe was run by Miss Amelia Evans . . . who lives up there even now . . . whose face, in the late afternoons, sometimes, when the heat is at its worst, can be seen peering out from that shuttered window. (MISS AMELIA COMES DOWN THE STEPS AND EXITS THROUGH REAR DOOR DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH.) We are going back in time now, back even before the opening of the cafe, for there are two stories to be told: How the cafe came into being . . . for there was not always a cafe . . . and how the cafe . . . died.

Fig. 1.--". . . a hand will slowly open the shutter."

How we came to . . . silence. It is toward midnight; April, eight years ago. Most people are in bed, but several men of the town, for reasons we shall see directly, prefer the front steps of Miss Amelia's general store. It is the kind of night when it si good to hear from far away, across the dark fields, the slow song of a field hand on his way to make love; or when it is pleasant to sit quietly and pick a guitar, or simply to rest alone, and think of nothing at all. Talk . . . or stay silent. (AS THE NARRATOR BEGINS TO EXIT EXT. SR. 1, MACPHAIL AND THE RAINEYS ENTER FROM EXT. SR. 1. UPON MEETING ON THE EXT., THERE IS AN AD LIB EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS AND OTHER TYPICAL CONVERSATION UNTIL POSITIONS ARE REACHED. RAINEY 2 CROSSES TO PORCH POST. MACPHAIL CROSSES TO PORCH LEFT OF BOX; RAINEY 1 CROSSES TO FRONT OF BOX. AT THE FINISH OF THE AD LIBS, A BRIEF PAUSE. HENRY MACY ENTERS FROM EXT. SL. 6.)

MACPHAIL. Who is that? (HENRY CONTINUES ADVANCING.) I said who is that there?

RAINEY 1. (A HIGH GIGGLY VOICE.) Why, it's Henry Macy; that's who it is.

RAINEY 2. (HE, TOO.) Henry Macy; Henry Macy.

MACPHAIL. Henry?

HENRY. (IN VIEW NOW, BY THE PORCH, DSL. OF PROSCENIUM WALL: NODS.) Stumpy; evening. (THEN TO THE TWO BOYS.) Boys?

RAINEY 2. How are you, Henry? And how is Marvin, Henry? How is your brither? (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES.)

MACPHAIL. Now, now.

RAINEY 1. How is he enjoying his stay, Henry? How is he enjoying the penitentiary?

MACPHAIL. Quiet, you!

HENRY. (PLACATING: HAS CROSSED DS. OF POST.) Now, Stumpy.

MACPHAIL. (DIRECTLY TO THE TWINS.) You got no sense at att. You all foolish in the head? Talk about Marvin Macy, Miss Amelia nearby, maybe, God knows? (RAINEY 2 GIGGLES.) Miss Amelia hear that name, she knock you clear to Society City. (BOTH RAINEYS GIGGLE.)

HENRY. (A WEARY SIGH.) That true, Lord knows.

MACPHAIL. Knocy you clear to Society City.

RAINEY 2. Miss Amelia ain't back. She at the still.

MACPHAIL. It don't matter.

RAINEY 1. You here for liquor, Henry?

HENRY. (DISTANT.) I just come by; just . . . by.

RAINEY 2. You not waiting on liquor, Henry?

MACPHAIL. He said he come by.

HENRY. (TO MACPHAIL.) Miss Amelia diggin' up a barrell?

RAINEY 2. (GIGGLING.) He just come by.

HENRY. I thirst for good liquor just like any man; I thirst for Miss Amelia's liquor.

RAINEY 1. We all waiting on liquor. (RAINEY 2 GIGGLES.

THE DOOR IN THE REAR OF THE GENERAL STORE OPENS: MISS AMELIA ENTERS, CARRYING SEVERAL GLASS BOTTLES. SHE KICKS THE DOOR SHUT WITH A FOOT. THE SOUND IS HEARD.)

MACPHAIL. Uh-oh.

RAINEY 1. It Miss Amelia; it Miss Amelia back.

HENRY. That so?

RAINEY 2. Why, sure, less we got prowlers . . . thieves, people breaking in t'houses like some people . . . (BOTH RAINEYS GO INTO SMOTHERED GIGGLES. MISS AMELIA CARRIES THE BOTTLES TO THE STORE COUNTER, PUTS THEM DOWN, COMES OUT ONTO THE PORCH BETWEEN MACPHAIL AND RAINEY 1.)

HENRY. Evening, Miss Amelia.

MACPHAIL. Miss Amelia.

RAINEY 1 AND 2. Evening, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (NODS, GRUNTS. NOT UNPLEASANTLY, THOUGH, IT IS HER WAY.)

HENRY. I come by. I thought . . . I come by.

RAINEY 1. . . . We said you been to the still.

MISS AMELIA. (VERY DELIBERATELY.) I been <u>thinking</u>.

RAINEY 2. (MISS AMELIA'S REMARK IS A KNOWN QUALITY. Oh-oh. (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES.) You been thinking on a new medicine? You making improvements on your croup cure?

MISS AMELIA. (SHAKES HER HEAD.) No.

RAINEY 1. You figuring on someone to sue, Miss Amelia? You found somebody you can bring suit against, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. No. (PAUSE.) I been thinking on some way to get some silence out of you; I been figuring up a nice batch of poison to stop your foolish mouth.

(THE RAINEY TWINS GIGGLE, LAUGH. MACPHAIL ROARS. HENRY SHAKES HIS HEAD, SMILES. MISS AMELIA PUSHES RAINEY 1 TO LEFT ROUGHLY, BUT NOT ANGRILY WITH HER LEFT FOOT.) That's what I been doing.

RAINEY 1. Oh, Miss Amelia, you wouldn't do that with me.

MACPHAIL. Best thing ever happen round here.

RAINEY 2. Poison me; you poison my brother, you poison me.

MISS AMELIA. Oblige you both.

MACPHAIL. Better idea yet. (A CHUCKLE OR TWO, SILENCE.)

MISS AMELIA. (A SILENCE. TO THEM ALL.) You come to buy liquor?

MACPHAIL. If you'd be so kind . . .

RAINEY 1. We all thirsty from the lack of rain. (RAINEY 2 GIGGLES.)

MISS AMELIA. I'll get some liquor.

HENRY. (JUST AS MISS AMELIA STARTS OFF, HALTING HER AT RIGHT OF DOOR.) I see something comin'. (THEY ALL LOOK R., WHERE A FIGURE CAN BE SEEN ENTERING EXT. SR. 1.)

RAINEY 1. It's a calf got loose. (THEY KEEP LOOKING.)

MACPHAIL. No; no t'ain't. (THEY KEEP LOOKING.)

RAINEY 2. No; it's somebody's youngun. (THEY KEEP LOOKING.)

MISS AMELIA. (SQUINTING.) What is it then?

(COUSIN LYMON CROSSES TO DL. OF PORCH: HIS CLOTHES ARE DUSTY: HE CARRIES A BATTERED SUITCASE. HE IS A DWARF: A HUNCHBACK. HE STOPS, SUITCASE STILL IN HAND: HE IS OUT OF BREATH.)

COUSIN LYMON. Evening. I am hunting for Miss Amelia Evans.

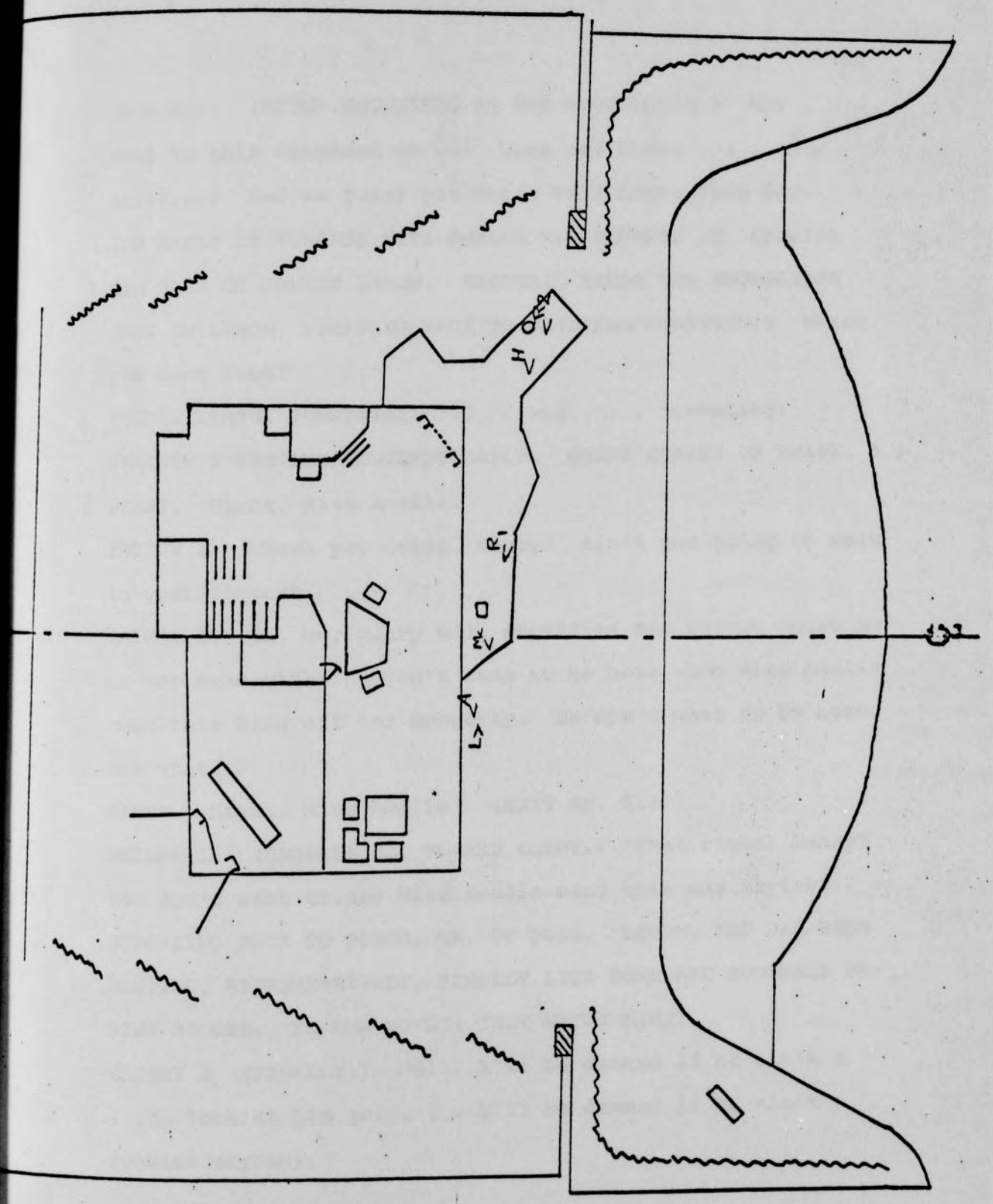
(THE GROUP NEITHER REPLIES NOR NODS: MERELY STARES.)

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A LONG PAUSE.) How come?

COUSIN LYMON. Because I am kin to her. (THE GROUP LOOKS AT MISS AMELIA TO SEE HER REACTION.)

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A LONG PAUSE.) You lookin' for me. How do you mean "kin"? (ON LAST LINE, MISS AMELIA CROSSES TO COUSIN LYMON. [PLATE II.] MACPHAIL CROSSES 2 STEPS LEFT ON PORCH.)

COUSIN LYMON. Because . . . (UNEASILY, AS IF HE IS ABOUT TO CRY, SETTING THE SUITCASE DOWN, BUT KEEPING HOLD OF THE HANDLE.) Because my mother was Fanny Jessup and she came from Cheehaw. She left Cheehaw some thirty years ago when she married her first husband. (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES.) . . . and I am the son of Fanny's first husband. So that would make you and I . . . (HIS VOICE TRAILS OFF. WITH QUICK BIRD-LIKE GESTURES HE BENDS DOWN OPENS THE SUIT-CASE.) I have a . . . (BRINGS OUT A PHOTOGRAPH.) This is a picture of my mother and her half-sister. (HE HOLDS IT OUT TO MISS AMELIA, WHO DOES NOT TAKE IT. MACPHAIL CROSSES IN FRONT OF AMELIA, TAKES THE PICTURE, MOVES BACK LEFT.)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MACPHAIL. (AFTER SQUINTING AT THE PHOTOGRAPH.) Why . . . what is this supposed to be! What are those . . . baby children? And so fuzzy you can't tell night from day. (HE HANDS IT TOWARDS MISS AMELIA WHO REFUSES IT, KEEPING HER GAZE ON COUSIN LYMON. MACPHAIL HANDS THE PHOTOGRAPH BACK TO LYMON, STEPPING BACK TO ORIGINAL POSITION.) Where you come from?

COUSIN LYMON. (UNCERTAINLY.) I was . . . traveling.

(RAINEY 2 GIGGLES CONTEMPTUOUSLY. HENRY STARTS TO LEAVE, 5.)

HENRY. Night, Miss Amelia.

RAINEY 1. Where you going, Henry? Ain't you going to wait on your liquor?

RAINEY 2. Oh, no; Henry will sacrifice his thirst cause he is too squeamish; he don't want to be here when Miss Amelia boot this kind off her property. He don't want to be here for that.

HENRY. Night, Miss Amelia. (EXIT SR. 5.)

RAINEY 1. (CROSSES SL. TOWARD HENRY.) That right, Henry? You don't want to see Miss Amelia send this one flying? (CROSSING BACK TO PORCH, US. OF POST. LYMON, WHO HAS BEEN WAITING, APPREHENSIVELY, FINALLY SITS DOWN AND SUDDENLY BEGINS TO CRY. NO ONE MOVES: THEY WATCH HIM.)

RAINEY 2 (FINALLY.) Well, I'll be damned if he ain't a . . . look at him go! . . . I'll be damned if he ain't a regular crybaby.

RAINEY 1. He is a poor little thing.

MACPHAIL. Well, he is afflicted. There is some cause.

(RAINEY 2 LOUDLY IMITATES COUSIN LYMON'S CRYING. MISS AMELIA CROSSES THE PORCH SLOWLY BUT DELIBERATELY. SHE REACHES COUSIN LYMON AND STOPS. LOOKING THOUGHTFULLY AT HIM. THEN, GINGERLY, WITH HER RIGHT FOREFINGER, SHE TOUCHES THE HUMP ON HIS BACK. SHE KEEPS HER FINGER THERE UNTIL THE CRYING LESSENS. THEN, SHE REMOVES HER FINGER FROM HIS HUMP, TAKES A BOTTLE FROM HER HIP POCKET, WIPES THE TOP WITH THE PALM OF HER OTHER HAND AND OFFERS IT TO HIM TO DRINK.)

MISS AMELIA. Drink. (BRIEF PAUSE.) It will liven your gizzard.

RAINEY 1. (CROSSING TO LYMON.) Hey there, you; better get your money up; Miss Amelia don't give free liquor. Unh-unh; you get your money up.

MISS AMELIA. (SHOVES RAINEY ASIDE: TO LYMON.) Drink.)

(LYMON STOPS CRYING AND, RATHER LIKE A SNIFFLING CHILD, PUTS THE BOTTLE TO HIS MOUTH AND DRINKS. WHEN HE IS DONE, MISS AMELIA TAKES THE BOTTLE, WASHES HER MOUTH WITH A SMALL SWALLOW, AND THEN DRINKS. THIS DONE, SHE HANDS THE BOTTLE BACK TO LYMON. HE TAKES IT ENTHUSIASTICALLY. TO THE OTHERS, AS SHE MOVES TO THE STORE DOOR.) You want liquor? You get your money up. (SHE GOES INSIDE, TAKES THREE BOTTLES FROM THE COUNTER. THE THREE MEN WATCH LYMON

AS HE DRINKS. MISS AMELIA RETURNS WITH THE LIQUOR, GIVES A BOTTLE TO EACH OF THE MEN, TAKES AND COUNTS THE MONEY. THE MEN OPEN THE BOTTLES--WHICH ARE CORKED--AND TAKE LONG, SLOW SWALLOWS. RAINEY 1 GETS SL. OF PORCH POST. MISS AMELIA NEAR LYMON.)

MACPHAIL. It is smooth liquor, Miss Amelia; I have never known you to fail.

RAINEY 1. Yeah.

RAINEY 2. Yeah, sure is.

(RAINEYS SIT BESIDE POST. MACPHAIL STANDS DC. ON PORCH, FOCUS TOWARD TWINS.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTERS SR. 2.) The whiskey they drank that evening is important. Otherwise, it would be hard to account for that which followed. Perhaps without it there would never have been a cafe, for the liquor of Miss Amelia has a special quality of its own. It is clean and sharp on the tongue, but once down a man, it glows inside him for a long time. (MACPHAIL SITS DC. ON PORCH.) Things that have gone unnoticed, thoughts that have been harbored for back in the dark mind, are suddenly recognized and comprehended. A man may suffer, or he may be spent with joy--but he has warmed his soul and seen the message hiddin there. (EXIT 2.)

RAINEY 1. (LEANING BACK, A QUIET SOUND OF DEEP SATISFACTION.) Ohhh--Whooooooo . . .

MACPHAIL. (AFTER A PAUSE.) Yes, that is good.

MISS AMELIA. (TO LYMON, AFTER A PAUSE.) I don't know your name.

COUSIN LYMON. I'm Lymon Willis.

RAINEY 2. (SOFTLY, TO NO ONE.) I am warm and dreamy.

MISS AMELAI. (TO COUSIN LYMON.) Well, come on in. (SHE MOVES TO DOOR.) Some supper was left in the stove and you can eat. (THE THREE MEN LOOK AT MISS AMELIA AND LYMON. RAINEY 1 NUDGES RAINEY 2. LYMON DOES NOT MOVE.) I'll just warm up what's there. (AS BEFORE, MORE OR LESS.) There is fried chicken; there are rootabeggars, collards and sweet potatoes.

COUSIN LYMON. (STIRRING, SHY AND COY, ALMOST LIKE A YOUNG GIRL.) I am partial to collards--if they be cooked with sausage.

MISS AMELIA. (PAUSE.) They be. (RAINEY 2 GIGGLES SOFTLY.)

COUSIN LYMON. (RISING, FACING MISS AMELIA.) I am partial to collards.

MISS AMELIA. (AT THE DOOR.) Then bring your stuff. (LYMON PICKS UP THE SUITCASE, MOVES TO DOOR, LOOKING AT THE THREE MEN AS HE SPEAKS.)

COUSIN LYMON. (SOFTLY, AS IF DESCRIBING A GLORY.) . . . with sausages.

MISS AMELIA. There is room for you upstairs . . . where you can sleep . . . when you are done eating. (MISS AMELIA TAKES LYMON'S SUITCASE: THEY ENTER THE STORE AND GO UPSTAIRS. THE THREE MEN SIT FOR A MOMENT.)

MACPHAIL. (STIRRING.) Well . . . (PAUSE.) . . . home. (STARTING TO EXIT SR. 2.)

RAINEY 1. (TO MACPHAIL IN SOME AWE.) I never seen nothin' like that in my life. (RAINEY 2 RISES AND LOOKS INTO HOUSE THROUGH DOOR.) What she up to? Miss Amelia never invite people into her house . . . eat from her table. What she up to?

MACPHAIL. (PUZZLED.) Don't know.

RAINEY 1. (FOLLOWING AFTER MACPHAIL.) What she up to, Stumpy, huh?

MACPHAIL. (SPEEDING UP, EXITING SR. 2.) Don't know.

RAINEY 1. (MOVE BACK TO RAINEY 2.) What she up to? She never done a thing like that since . . .

RAINEY 2. Shhh! (GIGGLES.) Can't talk about that.

RAINEY 1. Maybe . . . maybe she thinks there's something in that suitcase of his. (WITH SOME EXCITMENT.) Maybe she going to rob him! And then . . . and then kill him!

RAINEY 2. (GIGGLES.) Oh . . . hush. (GIGGLES AGAIN.)

RAINEY 1. (AS THEY MOVE OFF EXT. SL. 6.) I don't know. I don't know what she up to.

RAINEY 2. (EXPANSIVELY.) I am warm and dreamy!

RAINEY 1. (AS BOTH EXIT: SHAKING HIS HEAD.) I don't know.

(MISS AMELIA COMES DOWN STAIRS AND OUT ONTO THE PORCH BY POST. HENRY ENTERS EXT. SR. 1, TO PORCH EDGE.)

HENRY. (A GREETING THAT IS A QUESTION.) Morning, Miss Amelia? (SHE NODS, WAITS. HE TAKES A STEP OR TWO CLOSER.)

HENRY. You . . . you opening the store?

MISS AMELIA. (SQUINTING.) You here to buy?

HENRY. Why, not now; I just . . .

MISS AMELIA. Then I am closed.

HENRY. Well . . . I just . . .

MISS AMELIA. (FIXING A SLEEVE.) I am off to tend to some land I bought . . . up near Fork Falls road.

HENRY. (SHYLY.) Land, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Cotton. (PAUSE.) You don't want nothing? (PAUSE. HENRY SHAKES HIS HEAD.) Then I am off. (SHE TURNS TO CROSS SL. EMMA AND MRS. PETERSON ENTER EXT. SR. 6, IMMEDIATELY AS MISS AMELIA IS LEAVING. STOP AT CURVE.)

EMMA. (IN A PORTENTOUS WAY.) Morning, Miss Amelia.

MRS. PETERSON. (TIMID: BREATHLESS: ALWAYS BEHIND EMMA.) Morning, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSSES TO SL.: CONFRONTS THE TWO.) You two want something?

MRS. PETERSON. Why . . . why whatever do you mean?

EMMA. (CROSSING AROUND AND US. OF MISS AMELIA: PEERS INTO BUILDING.) Just passing the time of day, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. You here to buy?

EMMA. (AS BEFORE.) Why, are you open today, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. (VERY FORCIBLY FOCUSING FRONT.) Yes . . . or no?!

MRS. PETERSON. (FLUSTERED.) Why . . . no, no.

MISS AMELIA. (STRIDING PAST THEM EXITING.) I got business to tend to. (EXITS EXT. SL. 6.)

(HENRY CROSSES TO L. OF PORCH POST: EMMA CROSSES TO MRS. PETERSON.)

EMMA. (AFTER MISS AMELIA, BUT SO SHE CANNOT HEAR: REALLY FOR MRS. PETERSON AND HENRY MACY.) Oh! I'll bet you do. Have you foreclosed on someone, Miss Amelia? You grabbed some more property on a debt? You drove another poor soul out of his land? (MRS. PETERSON TSKS, RAPIDLY, SOFTLY.) Bet that's what she done.

HENRY. Morning, ladies.

EMMA. (SURPRISED.) Henry Macy! (CROSSING TO HENRY.) Is it true what I hear?

HENRY. (DRAWLED.) Why, I don't know, Emma. What is it you hear?

EMMA. (CROSS TO R. OF HENRY: FOCUS OUT.) Don't you sport with me! You know perfectly well what I hear . . . what the whole town hear.

HENRY. (A SMALL SMILE.) Well, now, people hear a lot.

EMMA. (FOCUS TO HENRY.) Two nights ago? Here? You all sitting around, late, you men?

HENRY. Well that is true; yes; we was sitting.

MRS. PETERSON. (CROSSING TO HENRY: EXASPERATED.) Ohhhhhh.

EMMA. . . . and then up the road, out of the dark, come this brokeback, this runt? Some tiny thing claim to be kin to Miss Amelia?

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HENRY. Now is that what you hear?

EMMA. . . . and this twisted thing claim to be kin?

MRS. PETERSON. (ALMOST WHISPERED.) . . . and he was took upstairs . . . and he ain't been seen since? (HENRY SHAKES HIS HEAD, LAUGHS, SOFTLY.)

EMMA. (CROSSING TO HENRY: OFFICIOUSLY.) Well?

HENRY. (CROSSES BELOW EMMA: TAKES TIME: STOPS DSR. OF PORCH. CALMLY: SLOWLY.) A brokeback came by . . . two nights ago . . . he claim to be kin to Miss Amelia . . . Miss Amelia take him in . . . feed him . . . offer him a bed. (MRS. PETERSON GASPS WITH ENTHUSIASM.)

EMMA. (TO NAIL IT DOWN.) And he ain't been seen since. (SHE CROSSES TO HENRY ON LINE.)

MRS PETERSON. (FOLLOWS EMMA: BEHIND HER.) I knew it, I kne it.

HENRY. You knew what?

MRS. PETERSON. (HELPLESSLY.) I . . . knew it. (STUMPY ENTERS FROM EXT. SR. 1: HE CROSSES TO RC.) [PLATE III.]

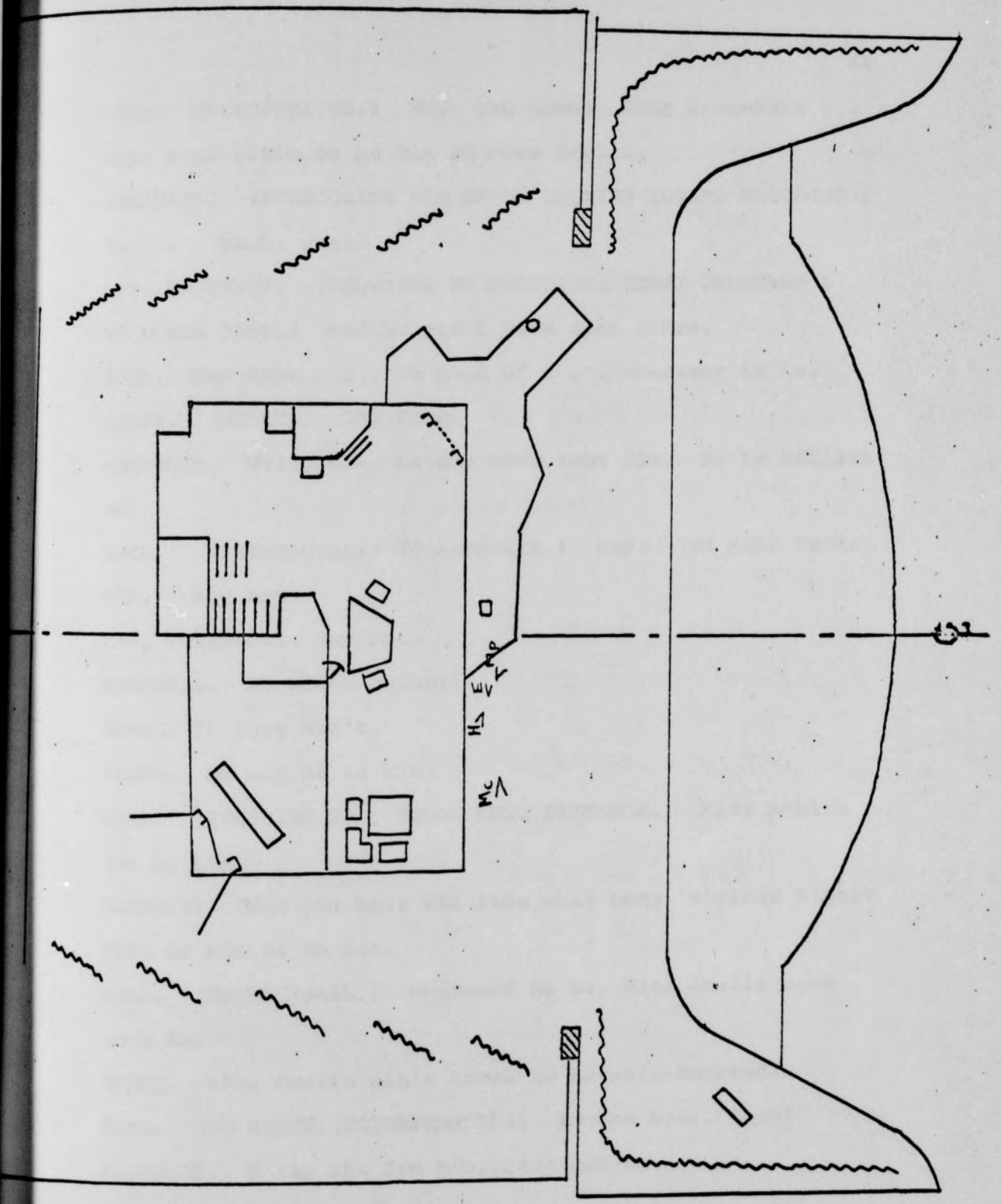
EMMA. (TO MACPHAIL.) . . . And he ain't been seen since, morning.

MACPHAIL. Morning. Who ain't? Morning, Henry.

EMMA. (CROSSING SR. TO MACPHAIL.) Why, you know . . .

HENRY. (COUNTERS EMMA'S CROSS SL.) Morning, Stumpy.

MACPHAIL. (TO MRS. PETERSON.) Morning. (TO EMMA.) Who ain't.



EMMA. (EXASPERATED.) Why, you know! That brokeback . . . that kind claim to be kin to Miss Amelia.

MACPHAIL. (SCRATCHING HIS HEAD, LOOKING TOWARD BUILDING.) Oh . . . yeah, yeah.

MRS. PETERSON. (CROSSING TO MACPHAIL: HENRY COUNTERS L. TO PORCH POST.) And he ain't been seen since.

EMMA. Two days . . . no sign of . . . whatever it is.

HENRY. (WEARY.) Oh, Emma.

MACPHAIL. Well, now, he may have took ill. He is afflicted.

EMMA. (MYSTERIOUSLY: TO MACPHAIL.) May. (TO MRS. PETERSON.) May not.

MRS. PETERSON. May not.

MACPHAIL. It ain't natural.

EMMA. It sure ain't.

HENRY. He say he is kin.

EMMA. (CROSSING SL., BELOW MRS. PETERSON.) Miss Amelia got no kin!

MACPHAIL. Who can have kin like what come 't'other night? That be kin to no one.

EMMA. (TO MACPHAIL.) Whatever he be, Miss Amelia been took in.

HENRY. Miss Amelia ain't known to be soft-hearted.

EMMA. (TO HENRY: TRIUMPHANTLY.) In the head, then!

MACPHAIL. I say she fed him, sent him on.

HENRY. You told me she give him a bed.

MACPHAIL. She say. That don't mean nothing. (ENTER RAINEY 1 AT 6. TRAILING BEHIND HIM, MERLIE RYAN. TO RAINEY 1.) That don't mean nothing; do it?

RAINEY 1 AND MERLIE RYAN CROSS TO PORCH POST.)

RAINEY 1. What don't mean nothing?

MACPHAIL. (CROSSING TO PORCH EDGE, DC.) Miss Amelia say she give teh brokeback a bed don't mean he stay.

RAINEY L. (WITH GREAT RELISH.) Ain't nobody seen him, hunh? Well, now, where could he be?

EMMA. (CROSSES TO MRS. PETERSON, WHO BREATHES AGREEMENT.) Just what I say.

MERLIE RYAN. I know what Miss Amelia done.

EMMA. (DISMISSING HIM.) Hunh, you--you queer-headed old thing.

MACPHAIL. (WITH A GESTURE TO QUIET EMMA: VERY INTERESTED. CROSSES TO MERLIE. HENRY COUNTERS USR.) What, what she done? (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES.)

MERLIE RYAN. I know what Miss Amelia done. (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES AGAIN.)

EMMA. (STEPS SL.) Well, what?

MRS. PETERSON. (FOLLOWS.) What?

MERLIE RYAN. (CROSSING TO EMMA.) I know what Miss Amelia done; she murdered that man for something in that suitcase. She murdered that man for something in that suitcase. She

cut up his body, and she bury him in the swamp. I know what Miss Amelia done.

HENRY. (RIDICULING THE IDEA.) Oh, now . . .

MRS. PETERSON. I knew it; I knew it . . .

EMMA. (WITH GREAT SLOW NODS OF HER HEAD.) So that what she done.

MERLIE RYAN. (SING-SONG: SIT ON BOX, C.) That what she done; that what she done. [Figure 2.]

HENRY. (TO RAINEY 1.) You tell him this? You put these things in his head?

RAINEY 1. (SO WE DO NOT KNOW IF HE IS SERIOUS OR NOT.) Me? Tell a thing like that to Crazy Merlie here? (CROSS TO MERLIE.) Why, Henry; you know be better'n that.

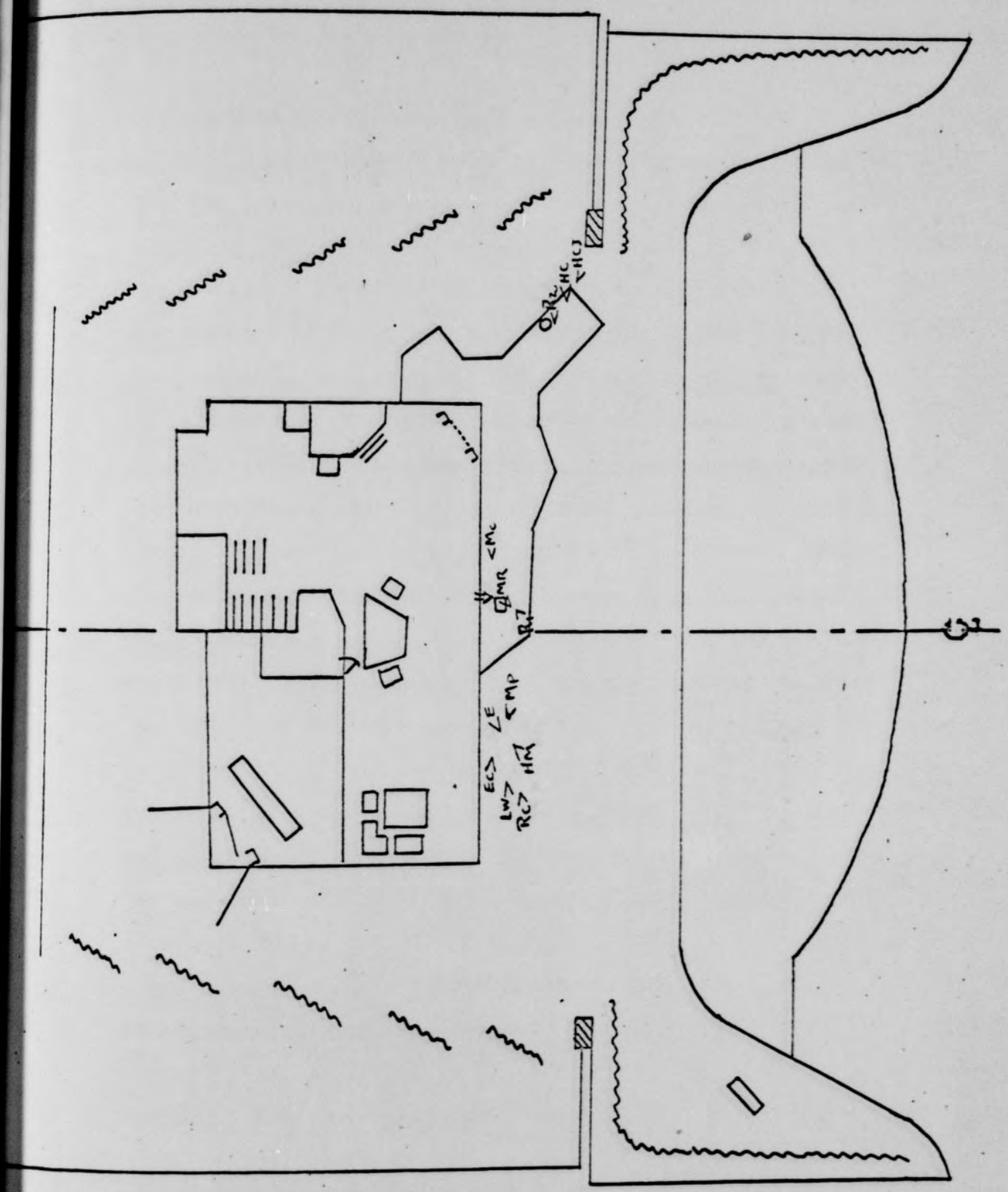
EMMA. Buried him in the swamp.

MACPHAIL. (ONE STEP SR. ON PORCH.) It ain't beyond reason.

MERLIE RYAN. I know what Miss Amelia done. (RAINEY 1 GIGGLES. BARELY AUDIBLE CHATTER FROM THOSE ON STAGE DURING THE FOLLOWING.) [PLATE IV.]

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER EXT. SR. 1.) And so it went that whole day. A midnight burial in the swamp, the dragging of Miss Amelia through the streets of the town on the way to prison, the squabbles over what would happen to her property--all told in hushed voices and repeated with some fresh and weird detail (ALL TOWNSPEOPLE ENTER FROM 1 AND 6, AND

Fig. 2.--"You tell him this? You put these things in his head?"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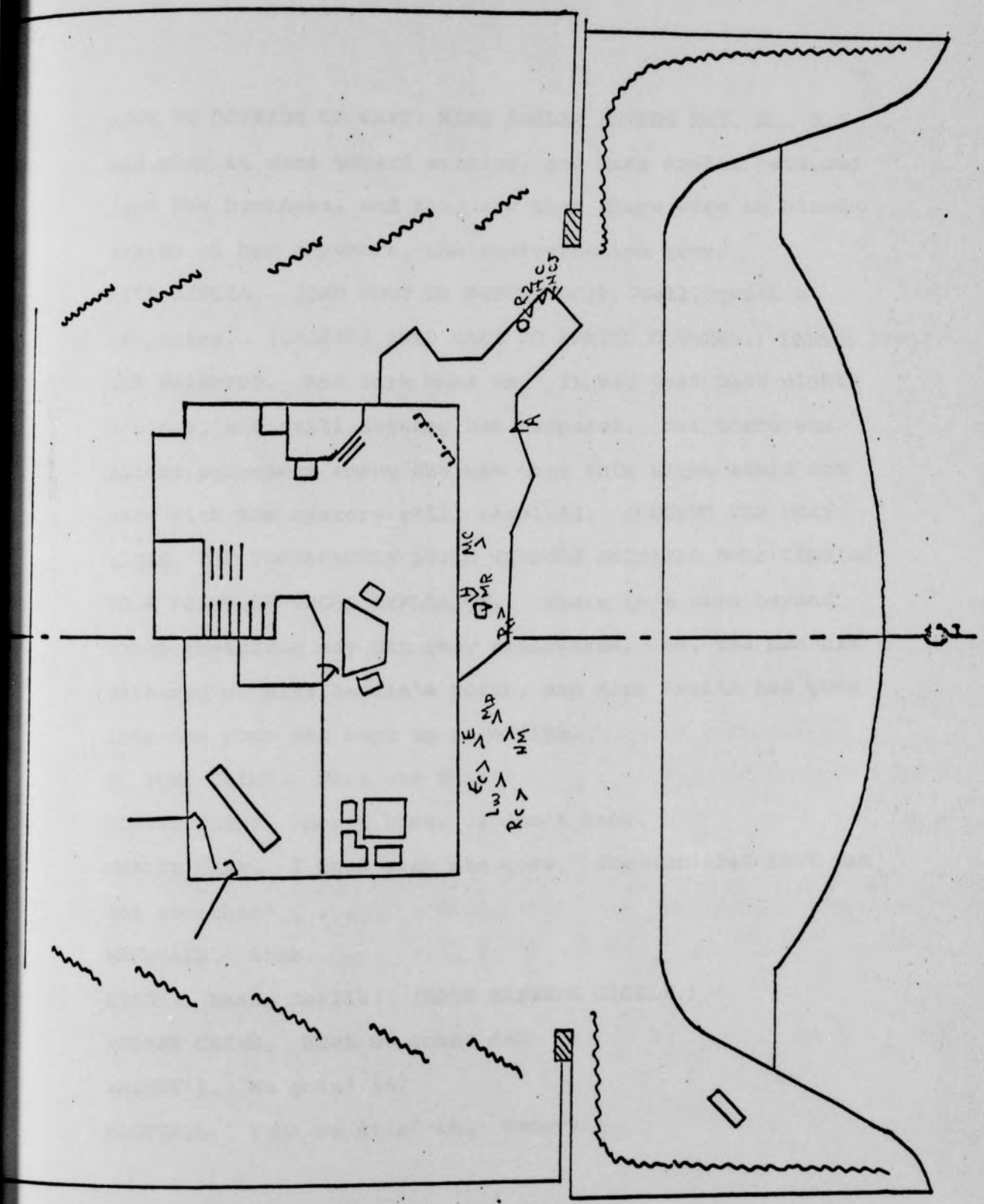
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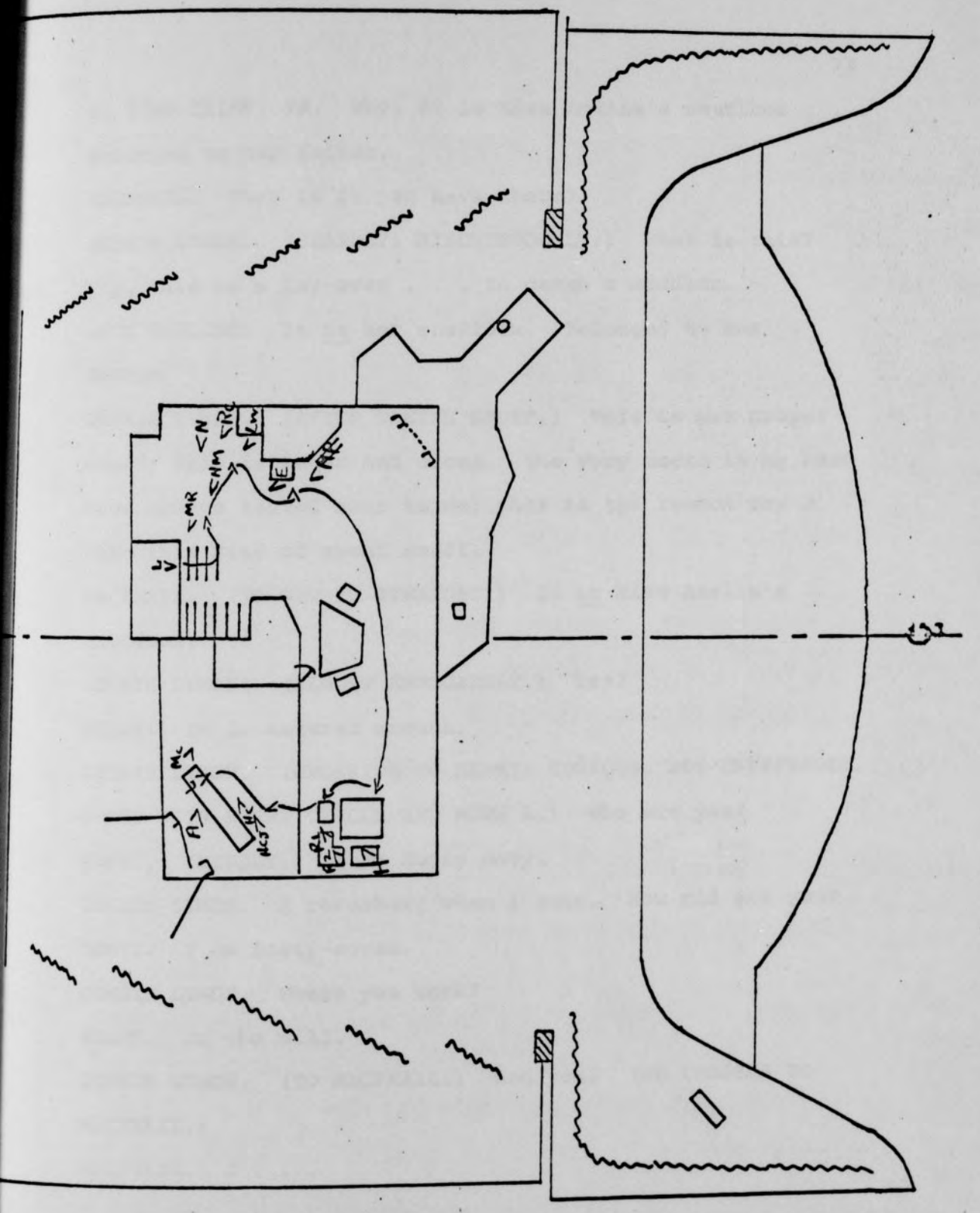
MOVE TO OUTSIDE OF CAFE: MISS AMELIA ENTERS EXT. SL. 6.)
And when it came toward evening, and Miss Amelia returned from her business, and they saw that there were no blood-stains on her anywhere, the consternation grew.
MISS AMELIA. (ONE FOOT ON PORCH, DC.) Well, quite a gathering. (CROSSES INTO CAFE TO BEHIND COUNTER.) [PLATE IVb.]
THE NARRATOR. And dark came on. It was just past eight o'clock, and still nothing had happened. But there was silent agreement among the men that this night would not pass with the mystery still unsolved. (DURING THE NEXT LINES, THE TOWNSPEOPLE BUILD THROUGH ANIMATED BODY TENSION TO A POINT OF VOCAL EXPLOSION.) There is a time beyond which questions may not stay unanswered. So, the men had gathered on Miss Amelia's porch, and Miss Amelia had gone into the room she kept as an office.
H. FORD CRIMP. What she doin'?
ROSSER CLINE. Don't know. I don't know.
MERLIE RYAN. I know what she done. She murdered that man for somethin' . . .
MACPHAIL. Shhh.
HENRY. Hush, Merlie! (BOTH RAINEYS GIGGLE.)
ROSSER CLINE. What we gonna do?
RAINEY 1. We goin' in?
MACPHAIL. Yup; we goin' in. Henry?

HENRY. (AFTER A PAUSE.) All right. (WITH THE MOVEMENTS OF ANIMALS, THE PEOPLE EXPLODE INTO THE CAFE. THEY FREEZE IN POSITION IN CENTER OF CAFE. COUSIN LYMON DECENDS TO THE LANDING. AT HIS ENTRANCE THE PEOPLE FOCUS ON HIM AND THERE IS A VERY AUDIBLE GASP OF BREATHS. COUSIN LYMON DESCENDS THE STAIRS, SLOWLY, ONE AT A TIME--IMPERIOUSLY, LIKE A GREAT HOSTESS. HE IS NO LONGER RAGGED: HE IS CLEAN: HE WEARS HIS LITTLE COAT, BUT NEAT AND MENDED, AND A GREAT LIME GREEN SHAWL, WITH FRINGE, WHICH TOUCHES THE FLOOR. THE EFFECT IS SOMEHOW REGAL. . . . OR PAPAL. THE ROOM IS AS STILL AS DEATH. UPON LYMON'S DECENT, THE PEOPLE MELT FROM THE CENTER TO PLACES SL. AND SR. IN CAFE. LYMON WALKS TO EACH GROUPING WHICH IS STRONGLY FOCUSING WITH ANGLED BODIES. AS LYMON PAUSES BEFORE EACH, THE PEOPLE JERK BACK. COUSIN LYMON HAS BEEN MENTALLY STRIPPING THE MEN. AS HE CONPLETES HIS CIRCLE, HE REACHES THE US. END OF THE COUNTER.) [PLATE V.]

COUSIN LYMON. Evenin'. (HE POPS HIMSELF ON THE COUNTER TOP ON THE LINE: TAKES FROM HIS POCKET A SNUFFBOX. THERE IS AN INTAKE OF BREATH FROM SOME OF THE PEOPLE. MISS AMELIA COUNTERS DL. OF COUNTER.)

MACPHAIL. (DARING TO MOVE A STEP CLOSER.) What is it you have there?

H. CRIMP. Yeah; what is that, Peanut?



H. FORD CRIMP, JR. Why, it is Miss Amelia's snuffbox . . . belonged to her father.

MACPHAIL. What is it you have there?

COUSIN LYMON. (SHARPLY: MISCHIEVOUSLY.) What is this? Why, this is a lay-over . . . to catch a meddler.

LUCY WILLINS. It is her snuffbox. Belonged to her father.

COUSIN LYMON. (AFTER TAKING SNUFF.) This is not proper snuff; this is sugar and cocoa. The very teeth in my head have always tasted sour to me; that is the reason why I take this kind of sweet snuff.

MACPHAIL. (TO GET IT STRAIGHT.) It is Miss Amelia's snuffbox.

COUSIN LYMON. (ALMOST ARROGANTLY.) Yes?

HENRY. It is natural enough.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING TO HENRY: CURIOUS, NOT UNFRIENDLY. GROUP WITH HENRY CIRCLE AND MOVE L.) Who are you?

HENRY. (KINDLY.) I am Henry Macy.

COUSIN LYMON. I remember; when I come. How old are you?

HENRY. I am forty-seven.

COUSIN LYMON. Where you work?

HENRY. In the mill.

COUSIN LYMON. (TO MACPHAIL.) And you! (HE CROSSES TO MACPHAIL.)

MACPHAIL. I . . .

COUSIN LYMON. Who are you?

RAINEY 2. That Stumpy MacPhail. (GIGGLES.)

COUSIN LYMON. How old are you?

MACPHAIL. I am . . . thirty-eight.

RAINEY 1. He work in the mill, too.

COUSIN LYMON. (IGNORING RAINEY 1, TO MACPHAIL.) You married, Stumpy MacPhail?

RAINEY 2. Oh, is he! (THERE IS A SNIGGER OF LAUGHTER FROM THE PEOPLE.)

MACPHAIL. (RETAINING HIS DIGNITY.) I am married. Yes.

COUSIN LYMON. (A SMALL PLEASED CHILD.) Is your wife fat? (WHOOPS OF LAUGHTER FROM THE PEOPLE.)

MACPHAIL. (EMBARRASSED, BUT BY THE ATTENTION, NOT THE FACT.) She is . . . ample. (MORE LAUGHTER.)

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING TO RAINEYS.) And you two giggling things . . . who are you?

ELMIRA. This is the Rainey boys.

MRS. HASTY MALONE. (INDICATING MERLIE RYAN.) And this is Merlie Ryan.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSES TO CENTER SET PIECE, POPS HIMSELF UPON IT AND CURTSIES.) Evenin', ladies.

(THE TOWNSPEOPLE INTRODUCE THEMSELVES, THE INTRODUCTIONS BECOMING GENERAL, SIMULTANEOUS. THE LADIES CROWD AROUND COUSIN LYMON: ADMIRE HIS GREEN SHAWL. THE CHATTER IS GENERAL, AND WHILE THERE IS A LOT OF TALK AND SOME LAUGHTER,

THERE IS STILL TENSION, AND PEOPLE TEND TO LOOK AT COUSIN LYMON OUT OF THE CORNERS OF THEIR EYES. THROUGH THE GENERAL CHATTER WE HEAR, SPECIFICALLY, THINGS LIKE THE FOLLOWING.)

RAINEY 1. When you come up the road t'other night . . . I swore it were a calf got loose.

RAINEY 2. (QUALIFYING.) It were so dark.

(COUSIN LYMON AND THE LADIES, EXCEPT MRS. PETERSON, HAVE MOVED DR.)

HENRY. It is a pleasure to have you visiting.

EMMA. (CROSSES TO COUSIN LYMON: FINGERS THE SHAWL.) This lime green scarf is pretty.

MRS. PETERSON. Oh yes; yes, it look well on you.

COUSIN LYMON. (TO MRS. PETERSON.) I will not bite you.

(HE CROSSES, PATRONIZINGLY. WHEN HE IS CLOSE TO HER, HE PRETENDS TO BE A DOG AND BARKS AND NIPS AT HER LEG.)

MRS. PETERSON. (ALMOST FAINTING.) Oh! Oh!

MERLIE RYAN. (CROSSES TO MACPHAIL.) Know what I thought she done? . . . Know what I thought happened to the brokeback? . . .

HENRY AND MACPHAIL. Hush. You be still.

RAINEY 2. . . . and I thought it were someone's youngun . . .

RAINEY 1. It were so dark.

COUSIN LYMON. Well, it were not.

RAINEY 2. No; it were not. (GIGGLES.)

RAINEY 1. It were dark. (GROUPS HAVE FORMED, AND THE CONVERSATION DOES NOT HINGE SOLELY ON COUSIN LYMON. AS THE AD LIB CONTINUES, MISS AMELIA ENTERS THROUGH THE UR. DOOR, UNSEEN BY THE PEOPLE. SHE STRIDES TO THE CENTER UNIT AND STOMPS. THE SOUND IS LIKE A SHOT: THE SILENCE IS IMMEDIATE: THE FOCUS IS ON MISS AMELIA.)

MISS AMELIA. (QUIETLY.) Does anyone want waiting on? (A BRIEF PAUSE, WHICH HENRY BREAKS. HE CROSSES TO MISS AMELIA.)

HENRY. Why, yes, Miss Amelia . . . if you have some liquor . . . (THIS SERVES AS A DAM-BREAK, AND SEVERAL OF THE MEN AD LIB AGREEMENT, AND THE GENERAL CHATTER STARTS AGAIN. MISS AMELIA TURNS, GOES BEHIND THE COUNTER, GETS BOTTLES, SERVES THE MEN, TAKES MONEY.)

THE NARRATOR. (CROSSES DC. IN HOUSE.) What happened at this moment was not ordinary. While the men of the town could count on Miss Amelia for their liquor, it was a rule she had that they must drink it outside her premises--and there was no feeling of joy in the transaction: after getting his liquor, a man would have to drink it on the porch, or guzzle it on the street, or walk off into the night. But at this moment, Miss Amelia broke her rule, and the men could drink in her store. More than that, she furnished glasses and opened two boxes of crackers so that they were there hospitably in a platter

on the counter and anyone who wished could take one free. (SUITABLE ACTION UNDER THE ABOVE, ANIMATED CONVERSATION CONTINUING.) Now, this was the beginning of the cafe. It was as simple as that. There was a certain timidness, for people in this town were unused to gathering together in any number for the sake of pleasure. (CROSS SR.) But it was the beginning. (THE ANIMATED CONVERSATION NOW BECOMES REAL. MISS AMELIA MOVES TO WHERE COUSIN LYMON IS STANDING.) [PLATE VI.]

MISS AMELIA. Cousin Lymon, will you have your liquor straight, or warmed in a pan with water on the stove?

COUSIN LYMON. (STEPS DS.) If you please, Amelia . . . if you please, I'll have it warmed. (THERE IS AUDIBLE CONSTERNATION FROM THE PEOPLE. AMELIA EXITS THROUGH KIT.)

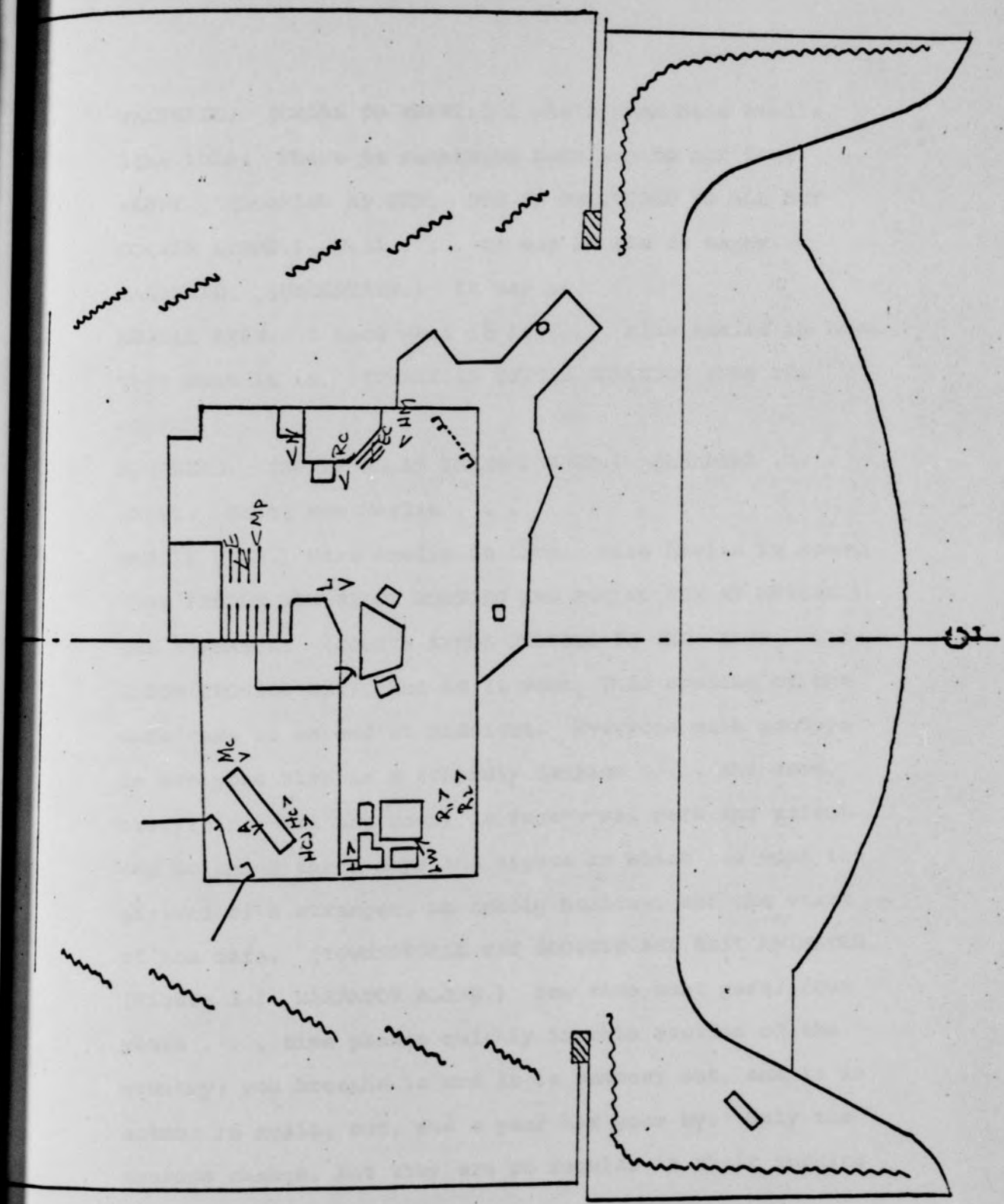
EMMA. (TO ANYONE, AS MISS AMELIA, SMILING SECRETLY, MOVES OFF TO DO COUSIN LYMON'S BIDDING.) Did you hear that? He called her <u>Amelia</u>! He said <u>Amelia</u>!

MRS. PETERSON. (BREATHLESS, AS USUAL.) Why, it is <u>Miss</u> Amelia to . . . to everyone. (COUSIN LYMON MOVES DC. AND LOOKS OUT.)

H. CRIMP. Her Daddy called her . . . girl. He called her girl. (RAINEY 2 GIGGLES.)

RAINEY 1. Some girl!

EMMA. (UNABLE TO GET OVER IT.) Did you hear it. He called her Amelia! (ENTER AMELIA: CROSS TO LYMON.)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MACPHAIL. (CROSS TO HENRY.) I ain't seem Miss Amelia like this. There is something puzzling to her face.

HENRY. (LOOKING AT HER. SHE IS OBLIVIOUS TO ALL BUT COUSIN LYMON.) Well . . . it may be she is happy.

MACPHAIL. (UNCERTAIN.) It may be.

MERLIE RYAN. I know what it is . . . Miss Amelia in love. That what it is. (THERE IS LITTLE REACTION FROM THE PEOPLE.)

MACPHAIL. (AS IF HE IS BEING JOSHED.) Ohhhhhhh . . .

HENRY. Hush, now Merlie . . .

MERLIE RYAN. Miss Amelia in love. Miss Amelia in love. (THE PEOPLE NOW REACT HOOTING AND POKING FUN AT MERLIE.)

THE NARRATOR. (COUSIN LYMON CROSSES TO EXT. DOOR. NARRATOR CROSSES DC.) And so it went. This opening of the cafe came to an end at midnight. Everyone said goodbye to everyone else in a friendly fashion . . . and soon, everything--all the town, in fact-- was dark and silent. And so ended three days and nights in which had come the arrival of a stranger, an unholy holiday, and the start of the cafe. (TOWNSPEOPLE SAY GOODBYE AND EXIT ANIMATED. [Figure 3.] NARRATOR ALONE.) Now time must pass; four years . . . time passes quickly in this section of the country; you breathe in and it is summer; out, and it is autum; in again, out, and a year has gone by. Only the seasons change, but they are so regular in their turning

Fig. 3.--Townspeople say goodbye and exit.

that four years can pass . . . (PAUSE.) . . . like that. (MISS AMELIA, DURING THIS SPEECH IS SETTING UP THE CAFE.) The hunchback continued to live with Miss Amelia. The cafe expanded in a gradual way, and Miss Amelia began to sell her liquor by the drink, and some tables were brought into the store, and there were customers every evening, and on Saturday nights a great crowd. The place was a store no longer but had become a proper cafe, and was open every evening from six until twelve o'clock. Things once done were accepted. (MISS AMELIA AND COUSIN LYMON ENTER THROUGH UR. DOOR: THEY REMAIN BY COUNTER.) And Cousin Lymon's presence in Miss Amelia's house, his sleeping in her dead father's room, was passed by, save by a few, women mostly, whose minds had darker corners than they dared dream of. And the cafe was welcomed by every one but the minister's wife, who was a secret drinker and felt more alone than ever. Four years have passed . . . (EXIT 5.)

COUSIN LYMON. (AS MISS AMELIA MASSAGES HIS SHOULDERS.) That do feel good, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. You have not grown stronger; you are still so pitiful.

COUSIN LYMON. I am not a big person, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. Now, I think your head <u>has</u> got bigger . . . and your hunch, too . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (PULLS AWAY, SURLY.) Leave me be.

MISS AMELIA. But your legs, as thin as ever . . . grass-hopper . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (A TONE OF COMMAND.) Amelia! (A SUDDEN GIGGLE: CROSSES TO CENTER PIECE: SITS.) Course, you could always figger up a new medicine for me . . . one turn me into a giant; you could do that.

MISS AMELIA. (AFFECTIONATELY.) You enough trouble big as you are. Don't know what I'd do with you normal size.

COUSIN LYMON. (GREATLY AMUSED.) Though there be a danger you make me a growin' medicine, since you so particular with your remedies you try 'em out on yourself first . . .

MISS AMELIA. (LAUGHS.) Hush, you.

COUSIN LYMON. . . . you make me a growin' medicine, an' it work, we gonna have you in the treetops, birds nestin' in you, an; . . .

MISS AMELIA. (GENTLY.) Ain't no medicine gonna make you grow, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. (BRIEFLY SERIOUS.) I know that, Amelia. (GIGGLES.) Only thing happen, you make up a new remedy be you try it out on yourself an' you spend the next two days hustlin' to the privy . . .

MISS AMELIA. (TO STOP HIM.) Well, you gotta try your medicine on yourself first, you be any good at doctorin'.

(MISS AMELIA BUSIES HERSELF WITH THE SR. TABLE AND CHAIRS.)

COUSIN LYMON. (GIGGLES.) I know . . . but it's funny.

MISS AMELIA. An' all ailments is centered in the bowel.

COUSIN LYMON. Oh?

MISS AMELIA. Yes.

COUSIN LYMON. (MISCHIEVOUS SCOFFING.) Do that be so, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Yes.

COUSIN LYMON. Well, your remedies <u>do</u> affect the bowel, no doubt there. Surprising anyone die in these parts.

MISS AMELIA. People die of natural causes. Like anywhere.

COUSIN LYMON. What is the natural cause, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. (AT A LOSS FIRST, THEN . . .) . . . dyin'.

COUSIN LYMON. (AS IF A GREAT TRUTH HAS BEEN REVEALED.) Oh. (CROSSES DL. TO DOOR: A TONE OF COMMAND.) Amelia! (A SMALL SILENCE, THEN HE CONTINUES IN A CAJOLING TONE.) As tomorrow is Sunday, Amelia, you gonna drive up into Cheehaw to the movie show? Or maybe we can go to the fair. There is a fair which is out beyond . . .

MISS AMELIA. We will go . . . we will go . . . . somewhere.

COUSIN LYMON. To the fair, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. We will go . . . somewhere. (COUSIN LYMON, DEAD-SPOILED, POUTING, MOVES TO LANDING AND SITS.) Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. (IMPERIOUSLY.) Your father's bed is too big for my size, Amelia; I am not comfortable in a bed that size.

MISS AMELIA. (LAUGHING.) Oh, now . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (GREATLY PETULANT.) I said I am not at ease in a ten acre bed. Have one made for me; have a bed made for me that I can sleep comfortable in.

MISS AMELIA. (ATTEMPTING A LIGHT TONE.) I will have a bed made for you, Cousin Lymon, (SHE SITS.) just to your size, and it can be used for you as a coffin some day.

COUSIN LYMON. (RISING, FURIOUS, SCREAMING, MOVES IN ON MISS AMELIA.) I am sleeping in a coffin now! I am sleeping in your father's coffin. (SOFTER, WHINING AGAIN.) I want a small bed, Amelia. I want a bed my size.

MISS AMELIA. (PLACATING.) Yes; yes.

COUSIN LYMON. And . . . and I want to go in the Ford tomorrow . . . to Cheehaw . . . to the movie show, and . . .

MISS AMELIA. (QUIETLY CORRECTING HIM.) You want to go to the fair.

COUSIN LYMON. (IMPERIOUS AGAIN.) Either way; don't matter

MISS AMELIA. (A SLIGHTLY SAD SMILE.) No; don't matter.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING DC: MYSTERIOUS AND INTENSELY CURIOUS.) Amelia . . . in the parlor upstairs there is

that curio cabinet that had that snuffbox you gave me I admired so when I first came.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSSES TO SL. UNIT.) Yes, Cousin Lymon, there be.

COUSIN LYMON. Well, that cabinet has in it some other things that i have become curious about, and I would like to ask you about them.

MISS AMELIA. (SUDDENLY DEFENSIVE, HER EYES NARROWING: CROSSES TO LYMON.) You go in there? You rummage about in that curio cabinet?

COUSIN LYMON. (HIS EYES NARROWING, TOO.) Why, Amelia, it is a curio cabinet, (CROSSING DL.) and I am a curious little person; besides, Amelia, you got no secrets from me. You got secrets from me, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. No.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSS TO AMELIA.) No. Well, Amelia, I have found something I would like to ask you about. (HE FISHES INTO A POCKET AND BRINGS UP AN ACORN.) I found this; an acorn. What does it signify?

MISS AMELIA. Why, it's just an acorn, just an acorn I picked up on the afternoon Papa died.

COUSIN LYMON. How do you mean?

MISS AMELIA. I mean it's just an acorn I spied on the ground that day. I picked it up and put it in my pocket. But I don't know why.

COUSIN LYMON. What a peculiar reason to keep it.

MISS AMELIA. Do you want it, Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. (AFTER A BRIEF, ALMOST UNKIND HESITATION, GIFTING HER.) Why no, Amelia. (CROSSES SR. BELOW AMELIA.) You may have it. It were your father's and he were dear to you.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSSES DL. TO DOOR: REMEMBERING.) He were. Law, I remember when I were little, I slept and slept. I'd go to bed just as the lamp was turned on and sleep--why, I'd sleep just like I was drowned in warm axel grease. Then came daybreak, Papa would walk in and put his hand down on my shoulder. (BY THIS TIME, AMELIA IS HALF- WAY BETWEEN THE DOOR AND THE STAIRS.) "Get stirring, girl," he would say. (SHE CONTINUES UP THE STAIRS TO THE LANDING.) Then later he would holler up the stairs from the kitchen when the stove was hot. "Fried grits," he would holler. "White meat and gravy. Ham and eggs." And I'd run down the stairs and dress by the hot stove while he was washing up out at the pump. Then off we'd go to the still, or maybe . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (HE HAS BEEN WATCHING HER MOVEMENTS.) You know I don't like grits lest they be done exactly right. You know I have told you many times, Amelia . . .

MISS AMELIA. . . . or when he would take me with him when he buried the barrels . . .

COUSIN LYMON. I say: the grits we had this morning was poor.

MISS AMELIA. . . . an' we would go, an' . . . all right, Cousin Lymon; I will take more care with them.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING TO AMELIA.) You loved your Papa, didn't you, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. I . . .

COUSIN LYMON. You can say it.

MISS AMELIA. (DOWN TWO STEPS.) Course I loved my Papa. Momma dyin' as she did, birthin' me . . .

COUSIN LYMON. You were normal size, Amelia? You a regular baby size when you born?

MISS AMELIA. (LAUGHING AMAZEMENT.) Course I was, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. Course you were.

MISS AMELIA. . . . an' . . . an' Papa an' me, we'd take long trips together . . .

COUSIN LYMON. Into Cheehaw? Or to the fair sometimes?

MISS AMELIA. Yes . . . an' sometimes beyond. Way beyond. We'd take long trips.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING SL. BELOW CENTER UNIT.) And I found this, Amelia-- (HE GOES INTO A POCKET, TAKES OUT A SMALL VELVET BOX, AT THE SIGHT OF WHICH MISS AMELIA MAKES A HALF GRAB, BUT LYMON MOVES AWAY.) I have found this tiny velvet box, and if I open it up . . . (DOES SO.) . . . what do I see?

MISS AMELIA. (BLUSHING.) You give that here. (CROSSES TO LYMON.)

COUSIN LYMON. What do I see? (PAUSE.) Hmm? What do I see? (CROSSES TO DR.) I see two little grey stones, and I wonder to myself "What do they be? Why has Amelia kept these stones?" What do they be, Amelia? (MISS AMELIA MUMBLES SOMETHING AT LAST, WHICH WE CANNOT HEAR.) Hmm? I did not hear you, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (SHYER THAN EVER.) They be . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (ENJOYING IT GREATLY.) Yes? Yes?

MISS AMELIA. (FINALLY.) They be . . . (TURNS TO LYMON.) . . . I were in great pain, years back, and I wnet into Chee-haw, to the doctor there--I couldn't figure the pain, and none of my remedies worked for it--and I went to the doctor there . . . (IN GREAT EMBARRASSMENT.) . . . those be my kidney stones. (A FAIR SILENCE.) Now, give 'em here. (STEPS TO HIM.)

COUSIN LYMON. (EXAMINING THE STONES.) So that is what they be.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSSING TO LYMON.) Give them here now.

COUSIN LYMON. I admire these, Amelia. You ain't given me a present in the longest time now. You give me these as a present. Yes?

MISS AMELIA. (CAN'T HELP BUT LAUGH.) But what would you do with them, Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSES BELOW AMELIA TO DL.) I have always admired . . . I have always wanted a great gold chain across my vest, and you could get me a great gold chain for across my vest, and you could have these hung from it. Oh, Amelia, I would love that so. I would so love that. (AMELIA LAUGHS BLUSHINGLY.) Oh, I would.

MISS AMELIA. Unh-hunh; yes, if you want it, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. (QUITE COLDLY.) Oh, Amelia, I do love you so.

MISS AMELIA. (WITH SOME AWKWARD GESTURE: KICKING THE DIRT OFF A BOOT, MAYBE.) Humf! Those are words I don't wanna hear. (PAUSE.) Understand?

COUSIN LYMON. (A TOO EAGER SCHOOLBOY.) Yes, Amelia!

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A SILENCE.) I am fond of you, Cousin Lymon.

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER EXT. SL. 6. MISS AMELIA LOOKS AT LYMON: LYMON FOCUS FRONT.) Ah, Amelia, I do love you so. Now, was that true? Well, we will find out. But it is ture that Miss Amelia loved Cousin Lymon, for he was kin to her, and Miss Amelia had, for many years, before the arrival of Cousin Lymon, lived a solitary life. And, too, there are many kinds of love . . . as we shall find out. (AMELIA AND LYMON EXIT THROUGH US. DOOR.) But this is how they talked, and was one of the ways in which Miss Amelia showed her love for Cousin

Lymon . . . her fondness. In fact, there was only one part of her life that she did not want Cousin Lymon to share with her; to know about; and it concerned a man named Marvin Macy. (TOWNSPEOPLE ENTER: ANIMATED: 1, 2, 3.) [PLATE VII.] We come now to a night of terrible importance, the beginning of a series of events which will result in calamity and great sadness. It looks to be a Saturday night like any other since the cafe opened, but the great and terrible events of a person's life occur most often in the most commonplace of circumstances. (THE NARRATOR JOINS TOWNSPEOPLE. MISS AMELIA ENTERS THROUGH UR. DOOR CARRYING A HANDWRITTEN SIGN WITH THE LEGEND, "CHICKEN DINNER TONIGHT. TWENTY CENTS." SHE MOVES TO FRONT OF COUNTER.)

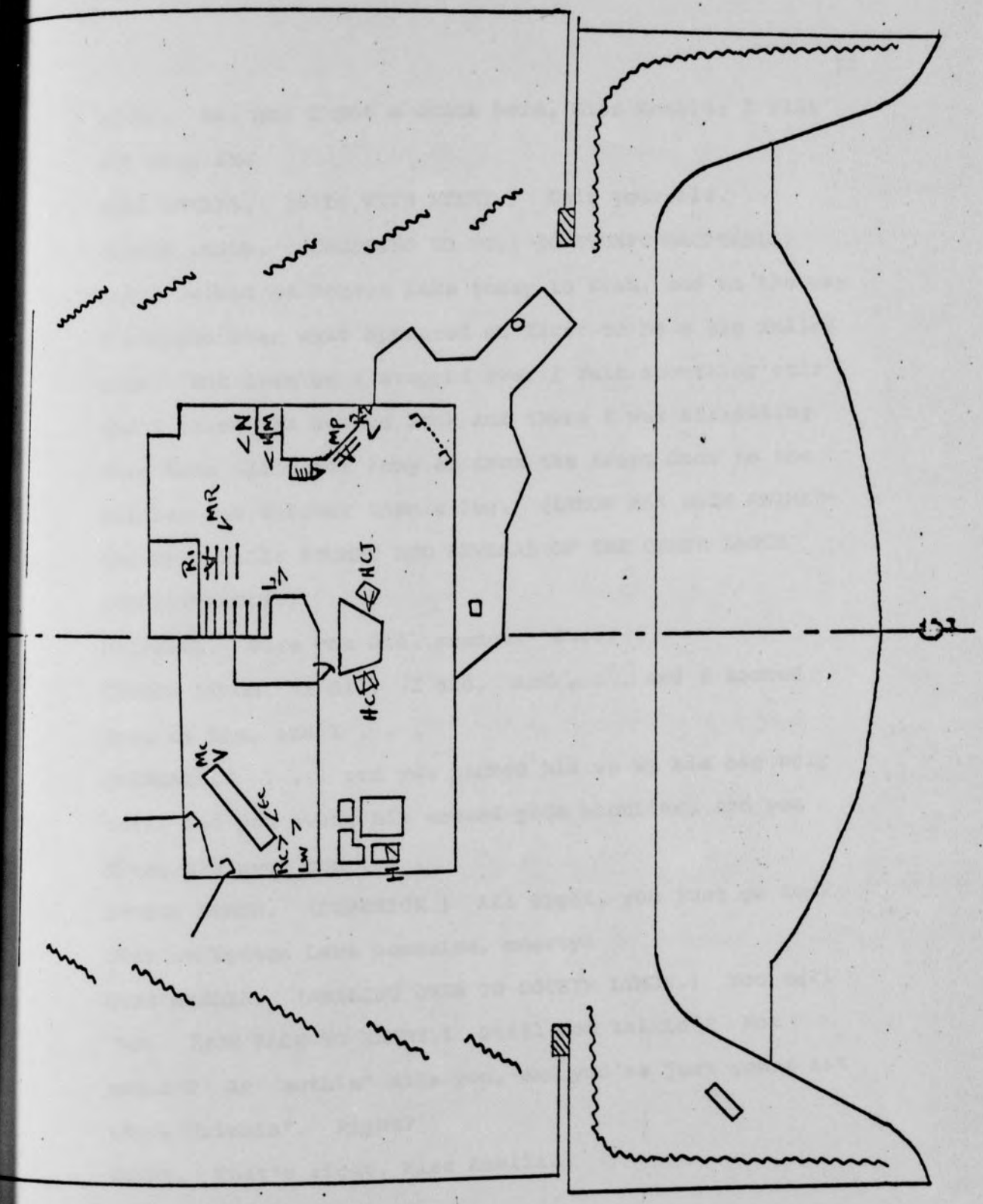
MISS AMELIA. (TACKING THE SIGN UP.) For them of you as can't read . . . chicken dinner tonight . . . twenty cents. (GENERAL APPROVAL, SOME PEOPLE MOVE TO THE KITCHEN TO BE SERVED. CONVERSATION IS ANIMATED THROUGHOUT BY TOWNSPEOPLE.) It's in the kitchen. Pay on the bar and get it yourselves. (CROSS TO HENRY.) What ails you?

HENRY. (HALF RISING.) Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. What ails you tonight, Henry?

HENRY. (OBVIOUSLY LYING.) Why . . . why nothing, Miss Amelia. Nothing.

MISS AMELIA. Then you better eat.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HENRY. No, no; I got a drink here, Miss Amelia; I will sit with it.

MISS AMELIA. (SITS WITH HENRY.) Suit yourself.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSSING TO UC.: TO STUMPY MACPHAIL.) And I walked to Rotten Lake today to fish, and on the way I stepped over what appeared at first to be a big falled tree. But then as I stepped over I felt something stir and I taken the second look and there I was straddling this here alligator long as from the front door to the kitchen and thicker than a log. (LYMON HAS BEEN ANIMATING THIS TALE: STUMPY AND SEVERAL OF THE OTHER LAUGH GOODNATUREDLY.)

MACPHAIL. Sure you did, peanut. Sure.

COUSIN LYMON. I did. I did. And . . . and I looked down at him, and I . . .

MACPHAIL. . . . and you picked him up by his big ugly tail, and you swung him around your shoulder, and you flung him over the . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (SUPERIOR.) All right, you just go look over at Rotten Lake sometime, smarty!

MISS AMELIA. (SMILING OVER TO COUSIN LYMON.) You tell 'em. (NOW BACK TO HENRY.) Still not talkin'? Not eatin'? An' nothin' ails you, and you're just gonna sit there drinkin'. Right?

HENRY. That's right, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (NODS KNOWINGLY AGAIN.) All right.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSS TO RAINEY 1.) And how are you tonight.

RAINEY 1. (GLOWERING AT RAINEY 2, WHO RETURNS THE GLOWER.) Just dandy.

COUSIN LYMON. (DETERMINED TO MAKE MISCHIEF.) Ohhhhh, and I see your brother is just dandy too.

RAINEY 1. I don't know who you mean.

COUSIN LYMON. Why, I mean your brother.

RAINEY 1. (GREATLY INDIGNANT.) Humn! That one!

RAINEY 2. (TO COUSIN LYMON, HE TOO INDIGNANT.) Don't you go talking' to that noaccount. He rob the hump off your back quick as look at you.

COUSIN LYMON. (CRAB MOVEMENT TO RAINEY 2.) You mean to say your brother is some kind of a wizzard? That what you mean to say?

MISS AMELIA. (STILL SITTING, BUT CONCERNED.) Cousin Lymon . . . ?

COUSIN LYMON. (CRABBING BACK TO RAINEY 1.) That what he mean to say? That what your noaccount brother saying? He some kind of wizzard?

RAINEY 2. (SO ALL WILL HEAR.) I don't mean that. I mean that thievin' nogood will steal you blind before you know it.

RAINEY 1. I ain't no thief!

COUSIN LYMON. (MISCHIEF AGAIN, COMING BETWEEN THE BROTHERS.) Oh, now, now, now. You talked to him; I caught you: you talked to your brother.

RAINEY 1. (ANGRY.) I talked <u>on</u> him; I said I ain't no thief. I didn't talk to him.

COUSIN LYMON. My, my; two years now you two ain't spoke a word to each other; not a word in two whole years.

RAINEY 2. (RISING.) He stole my knife!

RAINEY 1. (RISING.) I never stole nobody's knife! (THEY GLARE, SUBSIDE. COUSIN LYMON MOVES TO MISS AMELIA.)

COUSIN LYMON. Now, ain't that something, Amelia: Those two not speaking to one other for more'n two years now over six inches of sharp steel? Ain't that something?

MISS AMELIA. Some people been killed for less. (RISES.) I'm eatin'. Cousin Lymon, can I bring you your dinner?

COUSIN LYMON. My appetite is poor tonight; there is a sourness in my mouth.

MISS AMELIA. Just a pick: the breast, the liver and the heart.

COUSIN LYMON. (SWEET-SPOILED.) All right, Amelia, if you will do that for me.

MISS AMELIA. Henry?

HENRY. No, Miss Amelia . . . thank you. I will stay with your good liquor.

MISS AMELIA. (WALKING TO THE KITCHEN.) Ain't like you, Henry.

COUSIN LYMON. (SITS WITH HENRY: IMITATING MISS AMELIA.) Ain't like you, Henry. What ails you, Henry Macy?

HENRY. Nothin'! Now don't you start in, too!

COUSIN LYMON. Ooooohhhh . . . Law?

HENRY. Just . . . leave it be.

COUSIN LYMON. Now, that ain't polite, Henry . . .

HENRY. (A QUIET WARNING, A LITTLE DRUNK.) Look, runt! Go pick on someone your own size, hear?

MACPHAIL. Yeah, go back fight another flock o'alligators or whatever they was.

COUSIN LYMON. (TO MACPHAIL.) You go on out to Rotten Lake now, and you see! (EMMA AND MRS. PETERSON EMERGE FROM THE KITCHEN, CARRYING PLATES: CALL BACK TO MISS AMELIA IN THE KITCHEN.)

EMMA. (HER MOUTH FULL.) Real fine chicken, Miss Amelia!

MRS. PETERSON. Oh, yes, a good bird . . . it is, Miss Amelia.

EMMA. (STILL SHOUTING.) Real fine. (THEN SOTTO VOICE, TO MRS. PETERSON.) Probably stole them chickens off some poor tenant farmer out near . . .

MRS. PETERSON. Ooooooohhhh, Emma . . .

EMMA. . . . or maybe somebody behind on a loan to her, she walk in an' say, "I'll take all your birds." That's what. Somethin' like that.

MRS. PETERSON. (WHISPERING.) Emma.

EMMA. (LOUD.) Wouldn't put it past her. (SITS SL. UNIT.)

COUSIN LYMON. (HE HAS BEEN CRAWLING, LIKE A PUPPY SNEAKING, TO EMMA.) Warf! Warf! (SEVERAL PEOPLE LAUGH.)

EMMA. (RISING. MRS. PETERSON SQUEALS, JUMPS.) You stop that, runt. I'll knock you clear into next week!

COUSIN LYMON. (RAISES HES HANDS LIKE A PUPPY'S PAWS, WHIMPERS A MOMENT THEN.) Skinny! Skinny as a fence rail.

EMMA. (BACKS LYMON TO SL. TABLE. LOOMING ABOVE LYMON, AS MISS AMELIA EMERGES FROM THE KITCHEN WITH TWO PLATES.) Skinny: Well skinns is better'n twisted, you miserable little runt . . . !

MISS AMELIA. (A COMMAND.) Emma Hale! (EMMA SUBSIDES, MOVES BACK TO TABLE.)

EMMA. (NOT TO MISS AMELIA, BUT FOR HER EARS.) They is some good cafes in these parts, I hear, where they is not monkeys crawling around on the floor; where the owner's pets is not . . .

MISS AMELIA. (SETTING A PLATE DOWN BEFORE COUSIN LYMON AND ONE AT HER OWN PLACE.) That'll do now. (SR. TABLE.)

MRS. PETERSON. (WHISPERED, BREATHLESS.) Emma, you <u>know</u> you mustn't . . .

MISS AMELIA. Them people oughta go to them cafes; if they ain't careful they won't be welcome no more in <u>this</u> cafe. (TO COUSIN LYMON.) Eat.

COUSIN LYMON. (SWEET VICTORY AND VINDICATION, LOOKING

TOWARD EMMA.) Thank you, Amelia. And they is some cafes, I hear, where they do not allow just anybody to come in an' . . .

MISS AMELIA. (SILENCING HIM TOO, BUT KINDLY.) All right now, eat. (CONFRONTATION IN THE CAFE SUBSIDES: MARVIN MACY ENTERS EXT. SR., GAZING AT THE CAFE. TO COUSIN LYMON.) You was hungry after all.

COUSIN LYMON. (SHOVELLING FOOD INTO HIS MOUTH.) It would seem. But only for the delicacies. Like you choose 'em. (HENRY CLEARS HIS THROAT, MAKES AS IF TO SPEAK OF SOMETHING DIFFICULT, BUT STOPS.)

MISS AMELIA. Henry Macy, if you gonna sit here all night, and drink liquor, and . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (GLEEFULLY.) Bet he got a secret.

MISS AMELIA. You got a secret Henry?

COUSIN LYMON. Bet he do.

HENRY. (FINALLY.) I . . . I got a letter last week, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A BRIEF PAUSE, UNSURPRISED AT THE NEWS.) Yeah?

HENRY. It were . . . it were a letter from my brother.

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A SILENCE. LEANING TO HENRY, SAYING WITH GREAT FORCE.) You are welcome to it. (PAUSE.) You hear?

HENRY. He . . . he is on parole. He is out of the

penitentiary. I got this letter last week, an' he is on parole.

COUSIN LYMON. (SENSING SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY.) Who? . . . Who? . . . What?

MISS AMELIA. (SLAMING HER FIST DOWN ON THE TABLE: IMMEDIATE FOCUS FROM CROWD.) You are welcome to any letter you get from him, because your brother is a . . . because he belong to be in that pen the balance of his life!

COUSIN LYMON. Who? . . . Who is this about?

MERLIE RYAN. (CLIMBING OVER CENTER UNIT.) Marvin Macy comin' back? Is Marvin Macy . . .

MACPHAIL. Hush, you!

COUSIN LYMON. (TO HENRY.) You got a brother? Hunh? What is all this????

MISS AMELIA. Marvin Macy belong to be in that pen the balance of his life!

COUSIN LYMON. (BESIDE HIMSELF WITH CURIOSITY AND A STRANGE EXCITEMENT.) Who is Marvin Macy? Parole? What . . . What did he do?

MISS AMELIA. (STILL TO HENRY.) You hear me?

COUSIN LYMON. (TO PEOPLE.) What did he do?

MACPHAIL. (WITH EMBARRASSMENT, NOT LOOKING UP.) Well, he . . . well, he robbed three filling stations . . . for one.

MERLIE RYAN. Do Miss Amelia know Marvin Macy comin' back?

(SEVERAL QUIET HIM.)

HENRY. (WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY.) He don't say much . . . his letter don't say much . . . 'cept . . . (HE STOPS.)

MISS AMELIA. (HER FIST CLENCHED: RISES.) . . . 'cept? (DEAD SILENCE.)

HENRY. (FINALLY.) 'Cept hi is comin' back here. (FLURRY OF EXCITEMENT.)

MISS AMELIA. (A COMMANDMENT.) He will never set his split hoof on my premises! Never! That is all! (SWINGS AROUND TO THE OTHERS.) Get back to your drinkin', all of you! (SELF-CONSCIOUS AND HALF-HEARTED RETURN TO NORMALCY. BUT COUSIN LYMON WILL NOT BE PUT BY.)

COUSIN LYMON. (TO NARRATOR.) Tell me about Marvin Macy: Tell me what he done!

NARRATOR. Let it be.

COUSIN LYMON. Who is Marvin Macy?

NARRATOR. Go on about your business, now.

COUSIN LYMON. (TO NO ONE, TO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM.) Who is . . . who is . . . (SEES MISS AMELIA MOVING TO THE PORCH: RUNS AFTER HER.) Who is he? Amelia, who is Marvin Macy?

MISS AMELIA. (OUT ON PORCH.) Finish your dinner. (DS. DOOR.)

COUSIN LYMON. (OUT ON PORCH.) Amelia, who is Marvin Macy? I want to know who this man is! Who is . . .?

(MISS AMELIA AND COUSIN LYMON SEE MARVIN MACY SIMULTANEOUSLY. TENSE SILENCE.)

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS SR. 3 STEPS: TOWNSPEOPLE MOVE TO EDGE OF CAFE AND PEER OUT.) You clear outa here! You get on! (SILENCE FOR A SECOND, THEN MARVIN LAUGHS, TURNS, EXITS DR. MISS AMELIA STARES AFTER HIM, TURNS TO GO IN, GOES, LEAVING COUSIN LYMON ALONE.)

COUSIN LYMON. Who is Marvin Macy? Who is Marvin Macy? Who is Marvin Macy? (TOWNSPEOPLE SPLIT OUT FAST BY FRONT DOOR.)

THE NARRATOR. (COMING OUT OF THE CAFE: MISS AMELIA ENTERS CAFE AND EXITS UR. DOOR: LYMON FOLLOWS.) Who is Marvin Macy? Who is Marvin Macy? Now, while no one would tell Cousin Lymon about Marvin Macy that night in the cafe . . . people are braver in the daylight, and the next day it was not hard at all for him to learn what he wanted to know. And what he found out was this . . . that many years ago, back when Miss Amelia was nineteen years old, there occurred in her life a singular and awesome event: Miss Amelia had been married. Back when Miss Amelia was nineteen years old there were, at the same time, two children, brothers, the living remainder of a brood of seven children. The brothers were Marvin and Henry Macy, and Marvin was ten years younger than his brother, Henry. And Marvin Macy was a loom-fixer at the mill, and he was the handsomest man in the region . . . and the wildest. (HENRY AND MARVIN ENTER EXT. SR. 1.)

HENRY. The Tanner girl . . .

MARVIN. What about the Tanner girl? (STOPS US. BENCH.)

HENRY. She gone off to Society City.

MARVIN. (CROSSING DL. OF HENRY: CHALLENGINE.) So? (NO RESPONSE FROM HENRY.) So, let her go; she be happy there, give her some free space to run about in.

HENRY. I hear she left on account of you.

MARVIN. Who says? . . . Hunh?

HENRY. Mrs. Tanner. She stops me comin' back from the mill . . . yesterday . . . she say Laura go off to Society City of account of you . . .

MARVIN. On account of me <u>what</u> . . . ?

HENRY. Land, Marvin, <u>you</u> know.

MARVIN. (INTENTIONALLY TRANSPARENT PRETENSE OF INNOCENCE.) I don't know. (MOVES DS. ONTO APRON.)

HENRY. Ain't the first young girl you take out to the woods with you, ain't the first young girl you forced to leave home . . . you ruined. Ain't the first . . .

MARVIN. (BORED IMPATIENCE.) I know what I <u>do</u>. (LEERS.) I know who I take walkin' in the moonlight with me, goes out little girls comes back women . . . (MOVE DS.)

HENRY. It ain't right!

MARVIN. (SUDDENLY UGLY: CROSS TO HENRY.) Don't you tell me what's right. God damn, for a brother you act one hell of a lot like you was my father! (CROSS BELOW BENCH.)

HENRY. (SOFTLY, BUT STILL TO THE POINT.) It ain't right.

MARVIN. Them young girls . . . ? Them young girls you talk about . . . (CRUEL IMITATION.) . . . "it ain't right" . . . (SIT ON BENCH: LEGS OPEN.) . . . You know what they want? Hunh? How you know what they do out there in the woods, drive a man half out of his mind; what d'you know about that? (SNEERS.) The kinds moonlight walks you take, Henry, them solitary walks at night, that . . . (CHUCKLES.) . . . that ain't the same thing . . . ain't at all. (AN AFTERTHOUGHT, STILL NOT KIND.) 'Sids, don't think a walk in the woods with Laura Tanner do you any harm. Might do you some good!

HENRY. (CROSSING 2 STEPS: TURNS BACK ON MARVIN.) She ain't the first you take out there! They ain't all pressing theirselves up against you, free for all. They be a legal word for what you do out there, Marvin! (MOVES TO CURVE, l.)

MARVIN. (WITH QUIET AMUSEMENT.) Yeah? What be it?

HENRY. Never . . . never mind.

MARVIN. They be a word for what you do out there in them woods too, Henry.

HENRY. (EMBARRASSED, BUT STILL BROTHER.) You . . . you gonna get yourself in big trouble one day.

MARVIN. (CROSS DR.: SNEERING BRAVURA.) I been in trouble. Oooh, I am evil, Henry.

HENRY. Carryin' marijuana around with you, and . . .

MARVIN. (PRETENDING TO FISH INTO POCKET. CROSS TO HENRY.

Want some, Henry? Want some marijuana?

HENRY. (VACANT.) It is for them who are discouraged and drawn toward death.

MARVIN. (A GREAT LAUGH.) And you ain't? (PAUSE.) It is also for little girls who would be women; (CROSS TO BENCH.) makes their heads whirl, gives 'em that floating feeling. (LAUGHS AGAIN, SOFTER.)

HENRY. And aside from that, (CROSS TO MARVIN.) All your drinkin', and you not savin' any money, an' . . .

MARVIN. (ANGRY.) I got steady work, an' I make good money! I spend it as I like! I don't need you tellin' me . . . (CROSS TO HENRY.)

HENRY. (SOFTLY.) All right. (LOUD.) All right! MOVE UL.)

MARVIN. (MUTTERING: SIT.) I don't need you tellin' me anything 'bout how to go about livin'. I make good money.

HENRY. (WEARY IMPATIENCE: CROSS TO MARVIN.) . . . you make good money, an' don't need me . . . yeah, I know all about it.

MARVIN. Yeah.

HENRY. Yeah. Don't change nothin' though.

MARVIN. (ALMOST WHINING.) Henry.

HENRY. Man like you oughta settle down, (SIT.) oughta get married, raise some kids.

MARVIN. (SUDDENLY FURIOUS. RISES.) For what! Raise kids, have 'em a life like what we had? For what!

HENRY. They is no need for kids to grow up like we had to; they is . . . (MISS AMELIA ENTERS FROM CAFE. SHE STOPS BETWEEN DOOR AND BOX. THEY DO NOT SEE HER.)

MARVIN. (TO HENRY.) For what!

HENRY. All right now.

MARVIN. Kids better off not born!

HENRY. All right.

MARVIN. Damn fool idea! (SITS ON BENCH.)

MISS AMELIA. (IRONY: CROSSES TO DS. PORCH EDGE.) Afternoon. (HENRY RISES, MARVIN DOES NOT.)

HENRY. Afternoon, Miss Amelia.

MARVIN. Afternoon, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (TO MARVIN.) Your legs broke?

MARVIN. (LAZILY.) Why, no, Miss Amelia, my legs fine.

MISS AMELIA. (SNORTS.) I wondered. (PURPOSEFULLY, TO HENRY.) Whyn't you sit on back down, Henry?

HENRY. (RESITS.) Thank you, Miss Amelia.

MARVIN. Ohhhhh. (SLOWLY RISES: CROSS TO MISS AMELIA.) Half the time I forget you're a girl, Miss Amelia . . . you more like a man.

MISS AMELIA. Yeah? (SHE SWINGS BACKHAND AT MARVIN, WHO DUCKS, LAUGHS.)

MARVIN. Temper, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (ONLY HALF A JOKE.) Don't you worry about temper. I'll knock you across the road.

MARVIN. Bet you'd try.

MISS AMELIA. Bet I would. Do it too.

MARVIN. Well, you might try, Miss Amelia . . .

MISS AMELIA. Come on. I'll give you a sample.

HENRY. Now, why don't you two just . . .

MISS AMELIA. (SMILING.) Come on.

MARVIN. (GENTLY.) I don't go around hittin' girls, now.

MISS AMELIA. I don't say nothin' about you hittin' me! I said I knock you across the road an' I could do it.

MARVIN. (PLEASED.) Well, maybe you could, Miss Amelia; maybe you coult--at that.

MISS AMELIA. 'Course you could always pull a razor on me, like I hear you done to that man over in Cheehaw you fought.

MARVIN. (MOCK SHOCK.) Miss Amelia!

MISS AMELIA. I hear about it.

MARVIN. Now, what did you hear? (CROSS 3 STEPS LEFT OF MISS AMELIA.)

MISS AMELIA. I hear. I hear you take arazor to that man an' you cut his ear off.

HENRY. Oh, now.

MISS AMELIA. An' you know what else I hear?

MARVIN. (GREATLY AMUSED.) No. What else you hear?

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO POST.) I hear you got that man's ear salted and dried an' you carry it around with you.

HENRY. (DOGMATICALLY.) That ain't true.

MARVIN. (CROSS DC.) Now, do you think I'd do a thing like that?

HENRY. That ain't true.

MISS AMELIA. (TO HENRY: CROSS 4 STEPS L.) You know? You got proof it ain't? (CROSS TO MARVIN.) You got proof you ain't got that man's ear?

MARVIN. (LEANS BACK LAZILY: GRAPHIC.) You want proof, Miss Amelia? You wanna search me? (OVER SHOULDER TO HER.) I'll lay back real quiet and let you go through my pockets, (RUB ABDOMEN.) if you have a mind to. I'll lay back real quiet.

MISS AMELIA. (FINALLY AFTER A MOMENT'S NOTICEABLE EMBARRASSMENT AND CONFUSION.) Clear across the road! I'll knock you clear across the road. (MARVIN LAUGHS, HENRY JOINS IN.)

MARVIN. Uhhh-huh!

MISS AMELIA. (EMBARRASSMENT BACK A LITTLE, BEGINS TO MOVE UP ON PORCH.) I'll . . . I'll let you two go back to whatever caused all that shoutin' you two were at . . . yelling at each other . . .

MARVIN. Why, you know what we were talkin' about, Miss Amelia? (CROSS C.) Shoutin', you say? We were talkin' about how it time for me to get a wife, that's what.

MISS AMELIA. (SNORTS.) Who marry you?

MARVIN. (MOCK SERIOUSNESS.) Why, Miss Amelia, I thought you would. Don't you want to marry me, Miss Amelia

MISS AMELIA. (CONFUSED FOR A MOMENT, THEN.) In a pig's ear! (STRIDES INTO HER HOUSE.)

MARVIN. (CROSS 2 STEPS L.) Why, I thought you'd like that, Miss Amelia.

HENRY. Bye, Miss Amelia.

MARVIN. Thought you'd like that.

HENRY. (AFTER MISS AMELIA HAS GONE: CROSS TO MARVIN.) Some jokes ain't in the best taste, Marvin.

MARVIN. Hm?

HENRY. Some jokes ain't in the best taste.

MARVIN. (AFTER A MOMENTARY PUZZLEMENT.) Oh . . . no . . . that be a point, Henry. . . . Some jokes ain't.

HENRY. No; they ain't.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO POST.) Hey, you know I be right about something: Miss Amelia ain't no girl; she be a woman already.

HENRY. Yes, she be. Sure ain't right for you Marvin; she be grown up.

MARVIN. No, sure ain't.

HENRY. (PREPARES TO LEAVE.) Well . . . (MOVE 1 STEP UR.)

MARVIN. (TO HENRY.) Hey, Henry . . . ?

HENRY. Yeah.

MARVIN. A real grown up woman.

HENRY. (STARTS TO EXIT BY POST SL. MARVIN FOLLOWS.) Marvin . . .

MARVIN. Hey, Henry . . . if I was gonna get a wife . . .

HENRY. You crazy?

MARVIN. Some say.

HENRY. You ain't serious, Marvin. She laugh in your face.

MARVIN. Hmmm? Oh, yeah, bet you right.

HENRY. Aw, you ain't serious, Marvin.

MARVIN. (AFTER A MOMENT, SMILES AT HENRY.) No, I ain't serious. (BOTH EXIT 4.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER 2.) Oh, but he was; Marvin Macy was dead serious. He had, at that moment, without knowing it, chosem Miss Amelia to be his bride. He had chosen her to be his bride, and when he realized that astonishing fact he was dismayed. For while he knew he loved her, had probably loved her for some time without knowing it, he also knew he did not deserve her. He was sick with dismay at his unworthiness. (AMELIA ENTERS, SITS DC. EDGE OF PORCH.) So, for two full years, Marvin Macy did not speak to Miss Amelia of his love for her, but spent that time in bettering himself in her eyes. No man in the town ever reversed his character more fully. And finally, one Sunday evening, at the end of two years, Marvin Macy returned to Miss Amelia and plighted his troth. (MARVIN ENTERS 5, BEARING A SACK OF CHITTERLINS, A BUNCH OF SWAMP FLOWERS, AND, IN THE POCKET OF HIS DRESSY SUIT, A SILVER RING. SLOWLY, HIS EYES ON THE GROUND, HE STOPS A NUMBER OF FEET FROM MISS AMELIA.)

MARVIN. Evenin' Miss Amelia. (NO RESPONSE.) Sure is hot.

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER A PAUSE.) It so hot, what you all dressed up for a funeral for?

MARVIN. (AFTER A BLUSHING LAUGH.) Oh, I . . . I am come callin'. (LET IT BE UNDERSTOOD HERE THAT THERE ARE, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, VARYING PAUSES BETWEEN SPEECHES IN THIS SCENE.)

MISS AMELIA. Yeah? On who?

MARVIN. Oh . . . on you . . . Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (RESTATING A FACT.) On me.

MARVIN. (LAUGHS BRIEFLY.) Yep . . . on you.

MISS AMELIA. (CONSIDERS IT, THEN.) Somethin' wrong?

MARVIN. I . . . (HE MAKES A SUDDEN DECISION, HURREDILY BRINGS THE BAG AND THE FLOWERS OVER TO WHERE MISS AMELIA IS, PUTS THEM ON THE GROUND BELOW WHERE SHE IS SITTING, THE FLOWERS ON TOP OF THE BAG, AND RETURNES TO HIS POSITION.) . . . I brought you these.

MISS AMELIA. (STARES AT THEM.) What be these?

MARVIN. (TERRIBLY SHY.) Flowers.

MISS AMELIA. I can see that. What be in the bag?

MARVIN. (AS BEFORE. They be . . . chitterlins.

MISS AMELIA. (MILD SURPRISE.) Chitterlins.

MARVIN. Yep. (MISS AMELIA PICKS UP THE FLOWERS AS THOUGH THEY WERE A DUSTER.)

MISS AMELIA. What for?

MARVIN. Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. I say: what for? Why you bring me chitterlins and flowers?

MARVIN. (BRAVELY TAKING ONE OR TWO STEPS FORWARD.) Miss Amelia, I am . . . I am a reformed person. I have memded my ways and . . .

MISS AMELIA. If you are come to call, sit down. Don't stand there in the road.

MARVIN. Thank . . . thank you, Miss Amelia. (MARVIN SITS ABOUT FOUR OR FIVE FEET FROM MISS AMELIA.) I have mended my ways; I am, like I said, a reformed person, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (LOOKING AT THE FLOWERS.) What are these called?

MARVIN. Hunh? . . . Oh, they . . . they be swamp flowers.

MISS AMELIA. But what are they called?

MARVIN. (SHRUGS, HELPLESSLY.) Swamp flowers.

MISS AMELIA. They got a name.

MARVIN. I . . . I don't know.

MISS AMELIA. (PICK UP FLOWERS, RISES, CROSS TO EDGE OF PORCH, THEN LINE.) I don't neither. (SMELLS THEM.) They don't smell none.

MARVIN. I'm . . . sorry.

MISS AMELIA. Don't have to smell; they pretty.

MARVIN. (RISE: BLURTING.) Miss Amelia, I have mended my

ways; I go to church regular, and I have . . .

MISS AMELIA. I see it. You go to church now, services an' meetings . . .

MARVIN. . . . yes, an' I have learned to put money aside.

MISS AMELIA. You have learned thrift; that good . . .

MARVIN. . . . an' I have bought me some land, I have bought me ten acres of timber over by . . .

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS SR. C.) I hear so; timber is good land . . .

MARVIN. (1 STEP R.) . . . an', an' I don't drink no more . . .

MISS AMELIA. . . . don't drink? . . .

MARVIN. (BLUSHES.) . . . well, you know what I mean . . .

MISS AMELIA. Man don't drink none ain't natural.

MARVIN. Well, I don't squander my wages away on drink an' all that I used to . . .

MISS AMELIA. Un-huuh.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA.) . . . an' . . . Miss Amelia? . . . an' I am less sportin' with the girls now. I have reformed my character in that way too . . .

MISS AMELIA. (NODS SLOWLY.) I know; I hear.

MARVIN. . . . an', an' I have stopped pickin' fights with folks . . .

MISS AMELIA. (TURN TO HIM.) You still got that ear? You still got that ear you cut off that man in Cheehaw you fight?

MARVIN. (EMBARRASED: AWAY FROM HER.) Oh, Miss Amelia, I never done that.

MISS AMELIA. (DISBELIEVING.) I hear.

MARVIN. Oh, no, Miss Amelia, I never done that. I . . . I let the story pass 'round . . . but I never done that.

MISS AMELIA. (THE SLIGHTEST TINGE OF DISAPPOINTMENT.) Oh, that so.

MARVIN. So, you see, I have reformed my character.

MISS AMELIA. (NODS: CROSS TO SR. EDGE OF PORCH.) Would seem. (A LONG PAUSE BETWEEN THEM.)

MARVIN. Yes.

MISS AMELIA. Land is good to have. I been dickerin' over near Society City to pick up thrity-five acres . . . timber, too . . . man there near broke, an' he wanna sell to me.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO AMELIA.) Miss . . . Miss Amelia (BRINGS THE RING FROM HIS POCKET.) I brought somethin' else with me, too . . .

MISS AMELIA. (CURIOUS.) Yeah?

MARVIN. I . . . (SHOWS IT TO HER.) . . . I brought this silver ring.

MISS AMELIA. (LOOKS AT IT, HANDS IT BACK.) It silver?

MARVIN. Yep, it silver. Miss Amelia, will you . . .

MISS AMELIA. Bet it cost some.

MARVIN. (DETERMINED TO GET IT OUT.) Miss Amelia, will you marry me?

MISS AMELIA. (AFTER AN INTERMINABLE PAUSE, DURING WHICH SHE SCRATCHES HER HEAD, THEN HER ARM, THEN, VERY OFF-HAND.) Sure.

MARVIN. (ALMOST NOT HAVING HEARD.) You . . . Yes! . . . You will?

MISS AMELIA. (NARROWING HER EYES, ALMOST UNFRIENDLY.) I said sure.

MARVIN. Oh, Amelia . . .(AWAY FROM HER.)

MISS AMELIA. (SHARPLY.) What?

MARVIN. (IN A SPLIT SECOND STUDIES WHAT HE HAS SAID WRONG, REALIZES IT.) Oh, Miss Amelia . . . (HE REACHES HER, BEGINS THE GESTURE OF PUTTING ONE ARM AROUND HER BACK, THE OTHER IN FRONT, PREPARATORY TO KISSING HER.)

MISS AMELIA. Whoa there, you!

MARVIN. (RETREATS SOME.) Wait 'till I tell Henry; wait 'till I tell everybody. (VERY HAPPY.) Oh, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS BELOW MARVIN SL.) Well . . . g'night.

MARVIN. (MOMENTARILY CONFUSED, BUT TOO HAPPY TO WORRY ABOUT IT: 2 STEPS L.) G' . . . G' . . . G'night, Miss Amelia. (CROSS SR. OF HOUSE AND EXIT 2.)

MISS AMELIA. (GO IN AND UP STAIRS.) G'night . . . (PAUSE.) Marvin Macy.

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER USR. 3.) And the very next Sunday they were married. (CROSS EXT. SR.) It was a proper church wedding, performed by the Reverend Potter, and Miss Amelia had held a bouquet of flowers, and Henry was there to give Marvin away, and it was, indeed, a proper wedding. Now it is true that some of the townspeople had misgivings about the match, but no one--not even the most evil minded--had forseen what was to happen: for the marriage of Marvin Macy and Miss Amelia Evans lasted only ten days . . . ten unholy days which became a legend, a whispered legend in the town. (INTERIOR OF STORE VISIBLE. MARVIN AND MISS AMELIA STAND IN HOUSE DC. BELOW TABLE. MISS AMELIA WEARS A WEDDING DRESS, CARRIES A WEDDING BOUQUET. MARVIN MACY HAS A FLOWER IN HIS COAT. NARRATOR EXITS 5.)

MARVIN. (SHYLY.) Well, Miss Amelia . . .

MISS AMELIA. (PICKING AT HER DRESS.) Don't know why a person's supposet to get all up into this stuff. . . . just to get married.

MARVIN. (TOUCHES HER SLEEVE.) I think it look . . . nice.

MISS AMELIA. (STUDYING THE DRESS.) Belong to my mother.

MARVIN. It look . . . nice.

MISS AMELIA. Too short.

MARVIN. It look . . . nice. You . . . you pass it on down to . . .

MISS AMELIA. Hm?

MARVIN. You pass it on down to our kids . . . our daughters.

MISS AMELIA. (LOOKS AT HIM, SNORTS.) Hunh! (LAUGHS BRIEFLY, SARDONICALLY.) If you hungry, go eat.

MARVIN. I ain't hungry, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. No? Suit yourself. (CROSS US. OF MARVIN: TABLE TO BAR.) I got some figgerin' to do.

MARVIN. (SHYLY.) Figgerin' . . . Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. (TOTALLY OBLIVIOUS OF HIS SURPRISE.) Yeah, I got a bargain goin' on some kindlin' I want, an' I gotta figger. I think I figgered a way to get that kindlin' good and cheap. That farmer owe me a favor: once I fixed boils for him, an' he ain't never pain a bill he owed Papa when he were alive. I kin get it good and cheap. What you think?

MARVIN. I think . . . I think it be time . . . ain't it time for bed, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Ain't ten. You tired?

MARVIN. (CROSS SL. SIT ON STAIRS.) No. I ain't . . . tired.

MISS AMELIA. You wanna smoke a pipe? Before sleep? Ain't no pockets in this dress. Thought I had my clothes on.

MARVIN. No, I don't need a pipe. Miss Amelia, it . . . time for bed.

MISS AMELIA. (UP STAIRS, ON LANDING.) Yeah, . . . well,

c'mon . . . I'll show you where your room is.

MARVIN. My . . . room . . . Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. C'mon.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO HER ON LANDING.) Kin I . . . kin I take your arm?

MISS AMELIA. (LOOKS AT HIM AS THOUGH HE WERE CRAZY.) What for?

MARVIN. Well it is . . . proper for a groom . . . to take his bride by the hand, an' . . . (MISS AMELIA, FOLLOWED BY MARVIN MACY, CLIMBS THE STAIRS, DISAPPEARS. IT BECOMES DARK.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER EXT. SR. 1.) And what happened next, what happened that wedding night of Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy, (EMMA PEERS IN DOOR.) no one will ever truly know. But part of it--part of it--was witnessed by Emma Hale, (HENRY CROSS DC, EMMA FOLLOW.) who had watched it, her nose pressed against the downstairs window of the store. And she could not wait to tell what she had seen. (EXIT 1.)

EMMA. (TO HENRY.) It weren't no more'n a half haur after they'd gone upstairs, him followin' after her . . . (MISS AMELIA COMES DOWNSTAIRS: GOES BEHIND COUNTER.) Miss Amelia come thumpin' back down those stairs, her face black with anger? An' she changed outa that dress o' hers, an' she went into her office . . . (PAUSE FOR EFFECT.) . . . and she stayed there 'til dawn. She stay there the whole night! He stayed up there, an' she stayed down there in her office.

(PROUDLY.) An' how do you like that for a weddin' night?

HENRY. I . . . I . . . didn't know.

EMMA. (CROSS DR. IN FRONT OF HENRY AND SAUNTER OUT SR. PROSCENIUM.) All I can say is: a groom is in a sorry fix when he is unable to bring his beloved bride to bed with him. An! The whole town know it. There is some question there--especially a man like Marvin, his reputation: up-ending girls from here to Cheehaw an' back. (MARVIN DOWN STAIRS AND OUT ON PORCH TO POST.) Somethin' funny there.

HENRY. Marvin?

MARVIN. (HIS ATTENTION ONLY ON HENRY.) Henry . . . she . . .

HENRY. (GENTLY.) I know; I know.

MARVIN. (A CHILD.) Henry, she don't like me . . . she don't . . . want me.

HENRY. (CROSS BELOW MARVIN TO PORCH EDGE.) Well, now, Marvin, sometimes it take a while to . . .

MARVIN. What'd I do wrong, Henry? She don't want me.

HENRY. (HELPLESSLY.) Well, Marvin . . .

MARVIN. We get upstairs, an' . . .

HENRY. It take time, Marvin.

MARVIN. I don't know; I don't know, Henry.

HENRY. (VAGUELY.) Well . . .

MARVIN. (AN IDEA COMING TO HIM, ENTHUSIASM GROWING.)

Hey! Henry, maybe . . . (CROSS TO HENRY.) maybe it 'cause I didn't give her no . . . no weddin' gifts . . . you know women like to have them things. Hey, Henry? Maybe that it, huh?

HENRY. (CAUTIOUSLY.) Well now . . .

MARVIN. (CROSS DR.) That's what I'll do, Henry! I'll go in to Society City an' . . . an' I'll get her a bunch of stuff. That'll do it, Henry! I bet! (EXIT EXT. DR.)

HENRY. (AFTER HIM: CROSS TO DR. HOUSE.) Maybe . . . might be.

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER DR. 1. MARVIN ENTER UR. HOUSE DOOR TO DR. COUNTER EDGE.) And off he went to Society City, and he brought her back all kinds of things; a huge box of chocolates which cost two dollars and a half, an enamel brooch, an opal ring, and a silver bracelet which had, hanging from it, two silver lovebirds. And he gave these presents to her . . . and she put them up for sale . . . all save the chocolates . . . which she ate. And, sad to tell, these presents did not soften her heart towards him.

MISS AMELIA. (FROM BEHIND COUNTER.) Oh, by the way, I gonna drag a mattress down from upstairs; you can sleep on it, in front of the stove, down here in the store. (SHE WAITS FOR SOME REACTION, GETS NONE, GOES UPSTAIRS.)

MARVIN. (CROSS OUT TO PORCH.) Henry? . . . Henry? (AT POST.)

HENRY. Yes, Marvin.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO C.) Henry, I don't know what to do.

HENRY. Time, Marvin, time.

MARVIN. (PAUSE.) Yeah. (PAUSE.) Sure, Henry. (SHOUTS INTO THE HOUSE.) I be back.

HENRY. Marvin? Marvin where you . . .

MARVIN. (RUNS THROUGH EXIT 2.) I goin' into Cheehaw; I be back.

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER 2: CROSS C: CROSS SR.: EXIT 5.) There was, of course, speculation in the town on the reason Miss Amelia had married Marvin Macy in the first place. No one doubted that he loved her, but as to why she accepted his proposal in the first place there were myriad opinions. And while some people were . . . confused by the course of events, no one could honestly say he was surprised. (EXIT 3.)

MARVIN. (ENTER 2. GOES INTO HOUSE.) Miss Amelia? Miss Amelia? Miss Amelia! (CROSS TO COUNTER.)

MISS AMELIA. You been doin' a lot of travelin', I notice.

MARVIN. I . . . I been to Cheehaw today.

MISS AMELIA. (DOWN STEPS.) Yeah? What you do there?

MARVIN. I went into Cheehaw an' . . . (CROSS C.) an' I saw a lawyer.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO MARVIN.) Yeah? What you seein' a lawyer about?

MARVIN. (SHY, EMBARRASSED.) Well, now . . .

MISS AMELIA. (SMELLING TROUBLE.) What you know about lawyers?

MARVIN. Well, I got me a lawyer . . . (TAKES OUT PAPER.) . . . an' I got this paper drawn up . . .

MISS AMELIA. (BELLIGERENTLY.) Yeah, an' . . .

MARVIN. (SHY, BUT ENTHUSIASTIC.) An' what I done, I got this paper drawn up, an' I had the deed to my timber land . . . the . . . the ten acres of timber land I bought with my savin's the past couple years . . . an' I had the deed to my timber land turned over to you, Miss Amelia, I had it put in your name; it all yours. (HE EAGERLY HOLDS THE PAPER OUT TO MISS AMELIA.)

MISS AMELIA. (SHE TAKES THE PAPER, STUDIES IT.) Hm!

MARVIN. It all legal, Miss Amelia; I seen to that.

MISS AMELIA. (STILL STUDYING IT.) Hm.

MARVIN. Them ten acres all yours now.

MISS AMELIA. (STILL STUDYING.) Unh-hunh.

MARVIN. (SHY.) I . . . I thought you'd be pleased . . . Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (FOLDING THE PAPER, PUTTING IT IN HER JEANS, CROSS TO COUNTER.) Yeah; it all legal.

MARVIN. It is everything I have in the world.

MISS AMELIA. It legal.

MARVIN. It is everything I have in the world, an' . . . (CROSS UL. OF COUNTER.) I thought it would please you to have it.

MISS AMELIA. It adjoin my timber land, my acres. (CROSS SR. AROUND COUNTER.) It make a nice spread.

MARVIN. Miss Amelia . . .

MISS AMELIA. Yeah?

MARVIN. (HIS EYES ON HIS FEET.) I am not . . . as comfortable as I might be, sleepin' down in the store, in front of the stove, like I am.

MISS AMELIA. (NO COMPASSION.) Oh no?

MARVIN. No, I am not too comfortable sleepin' there. (THERE IS A PLEADING IN THIS.)

MISS AMELIA. Oh. (CROSS D. TO DOOR.) Well, in that case then, why don't you pull your mattress out onto the porch, sleep there, or move over into the smoke house? Plenty of places you can sleep.

MARVIN. (TOO PITIABLE TO BE PITIED: CROSS TO AMELIA.) I'd . . . you know where I'd rather sleep, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO COUNTER.) Or why don't you just move back with your brother, Henry?

MARVIN. I am your husband; you are married to me, Miss Amelia Evans. (ONE STEP TO HER.) Where is your likker?

MISS AMELIA. (PREOCCUPIED.) Hm?

MARVIN. Gimme some likker!

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS BEHIND COUNTER.) You takin' up drinkin' again? High nood drinkin'?

MARVIN. (CROSS TO COUNTER UL.) Gimme some likker!

MISS AMELIA. You want some likker, you get your money up like anybody else.

MARVIN. (DIGGING INTO HIS POCKET.) I got my money, you give me that likker! (HE SLAMS THE MONEY DOWN ON THE COUNTER. SHE REACHES UNDER THE COUNTER, BRINGS UP A BOTTLE AND SLAMS IT DOWN ON THE COUNTER. THE TWO GLOWER AT EACH OTHER, MURDEROUSLY.) Thank you.

MISS AMELIA. You welcome.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO DSL. CORNER OF HOUSE.) Now, I think I'll just take me off into the swamp an' have a few drinks, an' then I think I'll just come back here an' . . .

MISS AMELIA. You get yourself full of likker you don't set your foot in my house!

MARVIN. (3/4 TO HER.) We see about that . . . Mrs. Macy.

MISS AMELIA. (A THREAT.) You come back here, drunk, you wish you never born.

MARVIN. We see about that! I love you, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMEILA. (CROSS C.) Outa here!! (A BLAST.)

MARVIN. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA.) You my bride, an' I gonna make you my wife.

MISS AMELIA. (HER FIST COCKED.) One step more, you!

MARVIN. (AT HER NOW, TRIES TO EMBRACE HER.) I love you, Miss Amelia. (SHE HITS HIM IN THE FACE: HE FALLS BACKWARD AND DOWN.)

MISS AMELIA. <u>Out</u>! <u>Out</u>!

MARVIN. You . . . you broke my tooth; you . . . you broke one of my teeth.

MISS AMELIA. I break your head you don't get outa here!

MARVIN. (RISES.) You . . . you broke my tooth.

MISS AMELIA. (SHE KNOCKS HIM DOWN: KICKS HIM.) Out!

MARVIN. You . . . you hit me.

MISS AMELIA. You stay out, an' don;t you never come back!

(MISS AMELIA GOES BEHIND COUNTER TO GET GUN.)

MARVIN. (AT POST.) Miss Amelia? Miss Amelis, I comin' back in. You hear me? I got rights to be in here, (CROSS TO PORCH.) As you is my wife an' what's yours is mine, too. So, I comin' in. I got my rights now, and I'm comin' in there, an' I'm gonna . . . (MISS AMELIA TAKES 1 STEP TO HIM WITH GUN.) You . . . you can't do that, now . . . (SHE ADVANCES: HE RETREATS.) You . . . I got my rights, an' . . . you . . . you keep that thing off me! Miss Amelia . . . (SO PLAINTIVELY.) I love you.

MISS AMELIA. You come one step closer, I blast your head off. You step one foot on my property again, I shoot you. (BACKS HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE.)

MARVIN. (HE EXITS SL. PROSC. AS HENRY ENTERS 5.) I'm leavin' Henry. I can't take no more; I can't take no more of this Henry.

HENRY. (MISS AMELIA ON PORCH: SIT ON BOX. HENRY CROSS TO HER.) Miss . . . Miss Amelia? [PLATE VIIIa.]

MISS AMELIA. Yeah? Whadda ya want?

HENRY. Miss Amelia, Marvin say he leavin'. He say he gonna take off from you.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO SR. PORCH EDGE.) What this hear 'bout a bridge gonna be built . . . ten mile up, or so? What about that? I hear they gonna have prison labor put it up. Gonna have the chain gang work on it.

HENRY. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA.) He say he gonna . . . leave town.

MISS AMELIA. Been thinkin' . . . been thinkin' of havin' the prison farm bring some trustees work my cotton; it cheap labor.

HENRY. I . . . you could do that, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. I know I could.

HENRY. I . . . well . . . (BEGINS EXIT EXT. SL. 6.) Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. Henry. (MARVIN ENTERS EXT. SL. 6. MISS AMELIA SITS ON PORCH: MARVIN IS CARRYING A SUITCASE.)

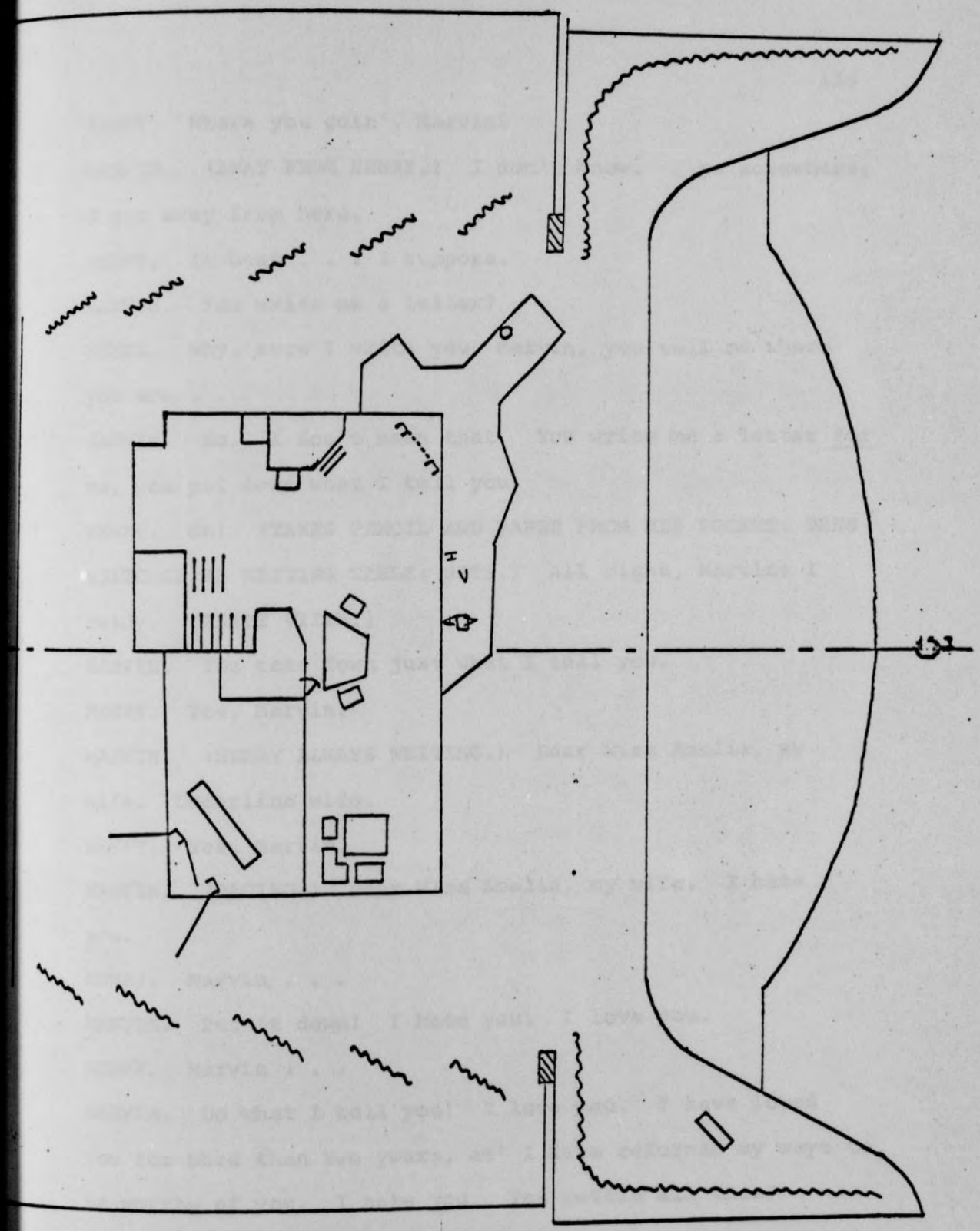
MARVIN. I'm leavin', Henry. (STOPS EXT. CENTER.)

HENRY. Are you, Marvin?

MARVIN. Yep. (ALMOST TEARFUL.) I can't take no more.

HENRY. No. I don't figger so.

MARVIN. So I'm takin' off.



HENRY. Where you goin', Marvin?

MARVIN. (AWAY FROM HENRY.) I don't know. I go somewhere; I get away from here.

HENRY. It best . . . I suppose.

MARVIN. You write me a letter?

HENRY. Why, sure I write you, Marvin, you tell me where you are . . .

MARVIN. No. I don't mean that. You write me a letter <u>for</u> me, you put down what I tell you.

HENRY. Oh! (TAKES PENCIL AND PAPER FROM HIS POCKET: USES SUITCASE AS WRITING TABLE: SITS.) All right, Marvin; I ready. [PLATE VIIIb.]

MARVIN. You take down just what I tell you.

HENRY. Yes, Marvin.

MARVIN. (HENRY ALWAYS WRITING.) Dear Miss Amelia, my wife. Underline wife.

HENRY. Yes, Marvin.

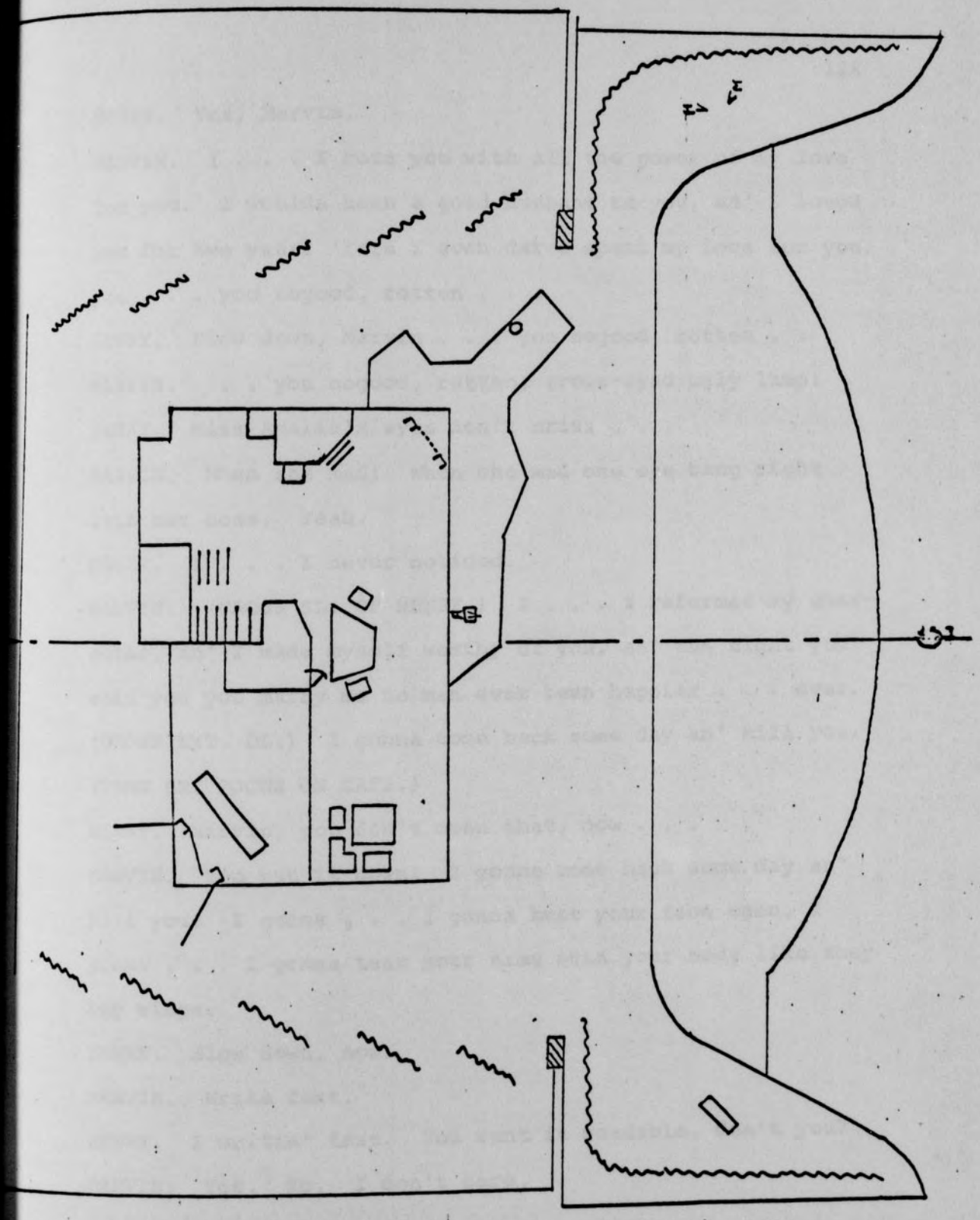
MARVIN. (PACING.) Dear Miss Amelia, my wife. I hate you.

HENRY. Marvin . . .

MARVIN. Put it down! I hate you. I love you.

HENRY. Marvin . . .

MARVIN. Do what I tell you! I love you. I have loved you for more than two years, an' I have reformed my ways to be worthy of you. I hate you. You gettin' all this?



HENRY. Yes, Marvin.

MARVIN. I . . . I hate you with all the power of my love for you. I woulda been a good husband to you, an' I loved you for two years 'fore I even dared speak my love for you, you . . . you nogood, rotten . . .

HENRY. Slow down, Marvin . . . you nogood, rotten . . .

MARVIN. . . . you nogood, rotten, cross-eyed ugly lump!

HENRY. Miss Amelia's eyes don't cross . . .

MARVIN. When she mad! When she mad one eye bang right into her nose. Yeah.

HENRY. I . . . I never noticed.

MARVIN. (CROSS SL. OF HENRY.) I . . . I reformed my character, an' I made myself worthy of you, an' the night you said yes you marry me no man ever been happier . . . ever. (CROSS EXT. DL.) I gonna come back some day an' kill you. (TURN SR. FOCUS ON CAFE.)

HENRY. Marvin, you don't mean that, now . . .

MARVIN. You put it down! I gonna come back some day an' kill you. I gonna . . . I gonna bust your face open, I gonna . . . I gonna tear your arms outa your body like they bug wings.

HENRY. Slow down, now.

MARVIN. Write fast.

HENRY. I writin' fast. You want it readable, don't you?

MARVIN. Yes. No. I don't care.

HENRY. I doin' the best I can.

MARVIN. I . . . I give you my land, land I worked hard for, 'cause I thought it'd please you; I . . . I bought you jewels, I bought you jewelry, an' you put it up for sale. You treated me like nothin', and I loved you. I . . . I love you, Miss Amelia; I love you. An' . . .

HENRY. (AS MARVIN PAUSES.) Go on, Marvin.

MARVIN. (ALMOST TEARFULLY.) An' I goin' away now, I goin' away an' I never comin' back. (A PAUSE.) An' when I come back I gonna fix you, I gonna kill you! With all my love very truly yours truly your husband Marvin Macy.

HENRY. (RISES.) You . . . you wanna sign it?

MARVIN. No, you write my name down, but I gonna sign it, special. (HE TAKES OUT HIS KNIFE AND GINGERLY JABS HIS THUMB, DRAWING BLOOD.) Here, gimme that. (HE BLOODS THE BOTTOM OF THE LETTER WITH HIS THUMB.) That make it all official.

HENRY. You . . . you want me to give her this?

MARVIN. After I go; I goin' now. (PICKS UP SUITCASE.)

HENRY. I take care of it.

MARVIN. Well, Henry . . .

HENRY. Marvin, you take care now.

MARVIN. I'll . . . take care of myself.

HENRY. Don't go . . . gettin' in any trouble.

MARVIN. (A BRIEF, RUEFUL LAUGH.) You know, Henry, I wouldn't be surprised one bit if I did? Wouldn't surprise me I turned into one of the worst people you ever saw!

HENRY. You . . . stay good now.

MARVIN. (A SUDDEN, SICK VIOLENCE.) Why?

HENRY. You . . . you take care.

MARVIN. Well . . . goodbye, Henry. (EXIT EXT. SL. 6.)

HENRY. Goodbye . . . Marvin. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA WHO IS SITTING ON BOX ON PORCH.) Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. That loom-fixer take off? Your brother finally clear out?

HENRY. Yeah. He gone.

MISS AMELIA. Good riddance.

HENRY. He . . . (HANDS HER THE LETTER.) He want you to have this.

MISS AMELIA. (GLANCES AT IT ONLY LONG ENOUGH TO SEE IT IS A LETTER.) Good riddance.

HENRY. Well . . . 'night, Miss Amelia. (EXITS DL. 6.)

MISS AMELIA. 'Night, Henry. (PUTS LETTER DOWN BESIDE HER.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER DR. 1.) And so ended the ten days of marriage of Miss Amelia Evans and Marvin Macy and answers the question that Cousin Lymon asked some years later. Who is Marvin Macy? Who is Marvin Macy? (EXIT DR. 1.)

COUSIN LYMON. (ENTER DL. OUT OF HOUSE.) Amelia!

MISS AMELIA. Yeah?

COUSIN LYMON. I been learnin' some things, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. Yeah? What?

COUSIN LYMON. (SIT ON BOX.) Amelia? Why you never tell me you married?

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO POST.) I ain't!

COUSIN LYMON. Yes, you be. You married Marvin Macy, years an' years ago. You married.

MISS AMELIA. No!

COUSIN LYMON. Why you never tell me that?

MISS AMELIA. I ain't married.

COUSIN LYMON. Why you never tell me you married, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. I were married. I were married, to that no account loom-fixer . . . but that is past . . . over! . . . done!

COUSIN LYMON. You ever divorce him?

MISS AMELIA. He run off; he run off years ago; I ain't married to him no more!

COUSIN LYMON. You ever divorce from him?

MISS AMELIA. (FURIOUS.) <u>He run off</u>! (2STEPS R.) I ain't married no more. (SOFTLY SAID.)

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, yes you be. You still married to him. Why you never tell me about that, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO LYMON.) It . . . it long ago; it way in the past. It . . . it don't have nothin' to do with . . . nothin'.

COUSIN LYMON. I find it pretty strange you never tell me about that, Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (STRANGELY SHY.) Ain't . . . weren't nothin' to tell. I . . . I married him . . . he run off. He . . . he no good Cousin Lymon. He never were a good man.

COUSIN LYMON. You married him.

MISS AMELIA. (SHYER YET.) We were . . . (CROSS DC. OF PORCH.) We were never really . . . married.

COUSIN LYMON. (1 STEP TO HER.) You promise you never have secrets from me, Amelia. Give me a real funny feelin', . . . knowing you keep things from me; give me a feelin' (TO HER.) I don't like.

MISS AMELIA. It weren't no real secret, Cousin Lymon, I don't . . . (CROSS TO HIM: FINGER ON HUMP.) I don't like you to worry none about things; I like you to be comfortable, an' . . . an' happy.

COUSIN LYMON. It give me a feelin' I don't like.

MISS AMELIA. It were nothin' for you to know.

COUSIN LYMON. (TO HER, ALMOST SAVAGE.) It were nothin' for me to know?!

MISS AMELIA. I . . . I don't keep much from you, Cousin Lymon; you know my business, my . . . (CROSS TO L. OF PORCH.) my accounts; I told you all about my Papa, an' all . . .

COUSIN LYMON. (ACCUSING.) All 'cept (TO HER.) Marvin Macy.

MISS AMELIA. All 'cept Marvin Macy.

COUSIN LYMON. (A CHANGE BECOMES TO COME OVER HIM: AN EXCITEMENT HAS COME INTO HIS VOICE.) An' Marvin Macy, he . . . he is, what I hear tell, such a man!

MISS AMELIA. Huuh! No good.

COUSIN LYMON. You . . . you keep from me the most . . . the most excitin' thing in your life.

MISS AMELIA. Never been no good, that one.

COUSIN LYMON. An' you keep the fact of him from me, the most important fact of all in your whole life . . .

MISS AMELIA. (BECOMING AWARE OF WHAT HE IS SAYING.) Cousin Lymon . . . ?

COUSIN LYMON. . . . a man like Marvin Macy, who has been <u>everywhere</u>, who has seen things no other never seen, who--

MISS AMELIA. (1 STEP TO HIM.) Cousin Lymon!

COUSIN LYMON. . . . who has . . . who has . . . been to <u>Atlanta</u>!

MISS AMELIA. Atlanta ain't much.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSS DC.) Who has been to Atlanta, an' . . . an' who has had to do with the law . . . an' (THIS IS ECSTASY.) who has spent time in the penitentiary. (TO HER.) Oh, Amelia! You have kept this from me!

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO LYMON.) He is a common criminal, that's all!

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, Amelia, he has been in the pen and . . . an' I bet he spent time on the chain gang. Oh, Amelia!

MISS AMELIA. You . . . you seen the chain gang, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. (HANDS BETWEEN KNEES.) Yes!

MISS AMELIA. A bunch of common criminals, chained together by the ankle, workin' on the roads in the broilin' sun, a guard standin' over 'em with a gun.

COUSIN LYMON. Yes! Yes! Yes! Amelia!

MISS AMELIA. Cousin Lymon . . . they common criminals, they . . . they got no freedom.

COUSIN LYMON. I know, Amelia . . . (1 STEP DOWN.) but they <u>together</u>.

MISS AMELIA. We together . . . Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. (DISMISSING IT.) Yes, Amelia, we together.

MISS AMELIA. An' . . . (CROSS TO COUSIN LYMON.) an' we got a good life together.

COUSIN LYMON. (SAME.) Oh, yes, of course, Amelia. (THE ECSTASY RETURNS.) An' they are together, those men, an' . . . an; how they <u>sing</u>, Amelia! (TO HER.) You hear them sing, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Yes, I hear them sing.

COUSIN LYMON. An' . . . an' they . . . <u>together</u>. (MARVIN ENTERS DSR. 2. LYMON GOES TOWARD HIM.)

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS DRC.) You clear outa here!

MARVIN. (THROWS HIS HEAD BACK, LAUGHS CONTEMPTOUSLY AT MISS AMELIA. TO COUSIN LYMON.) Whatta you want, bug?

MISS AMELIA. Cousin Lymon!

COUSIN LYMON. Leave it be, Amelia. You . . . you be Marvin Macy. (EXCITEMENT GROWING.) You be Marvin Mcy.

MARVIN. What ails this brokeback?

MISS AMELIA. You clear out!

COUSIN LYMON. You been . . . you been to Atlanta, an' . . . an' . . . an' . . .

MARVIN. Is the runt throwin' a fit?

COUSIN LYMON. An' . . . an' . . . an' . . . you been to the pen. (MARVIN BACKHANDS LYMON A SHARP CUFF ON THE EAR WHICH SENDS HIM SPRAWLING BACKWARDS TOWARD C. HE FALLS, SCRAMBLES UP.)

MARVIN. That'll learn you, brokeback, starin' at me!

COUSIN LYMON. (MISS AMELIA GOES TOWARD MARVIN. COUSIN LYMON GRABS HER.) Leave it be, Miss Amelia . . . just leave . . . it . . . be . . .

MISS AMELIA. I'll fix that nogood!

COUSIN LYMON. Leave me alone, Amelia! Just leave it be!

MISS AMELIA. Cousin Lymon!

MARVIN. (LAUGHS.) Bye . . . Mrs. Macy. (EXITS DR. 2).

COUSIN LYMON. (FOLLOWS MARVIN OUT.) Marvin Macy!

MISS AMELIA. Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. Marvin Macy! (OFF STAGE.) Marvin Macy? Marvin Macy? (MISS AMELIA IS LEFT ALONE ON STAGE: AFTER PAUSE, MISS AMELIA GOES UPSTAIRS.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER AROUND USL. OF HOUSE.) The time has come to speak about love. Now consider three people who were the subject to that condition. (CROSS TO PORCH POST.) Miss Amelia, Cousin Lymon, and Marvin Macy. But what sort of thing is love? First of all, it is a joint experience between two persons, but that fact does not mean that it is a mililar experience to the two people involved. There are the lover and the beloved, but these two come from different countries. (CROSS SR. OF PORCH.) Often the beloved is only the stimulus for all the stored-up love which has lain quiet within the lover for a long time hitherto. And somehow every lover knows this. He feels in his soul that this love is a solitary thing. He comes to know a new, strange loneliness. Now, the beloved can also be of any description: the most outlandish people can be the stimulus for love. Yes, and the lover may see this as clearly as anyone else--but that does not affect the evolution of his love one whit. Therefore, the quality and value of any love is determined solely by the lover himself. It is for this reason that most of us would rather love than be loved; and the curt truth is that, in a deep secret way, the state of being loved is intolerable to many; for the lover craves any possible relation with the beloved, even if this experience can cause them both only pain. But though the outward facts of love are often sad and ridiculous, it must be remembered that no one can know what really takes

place in the soul of the lover himself. (KEEP CROSSING TO DSR. AT END OF SPEECH.) So, who but God can be the final judge of any love? But one thing can be said about these three people--all of whom, Miss Amelia, Cousin Lymon, and Marvin Macy, all of whom were subject to the condition of love. The thing that can be said is this: No good will come of it. (EXIT USR. BEHIND HOUSE. BEFORE NARRATOR IS COMPLETELY OFF, HENRY AND MARVIN ENTER EXT. 6.)

MARVIN. (LYMON ENTERS EXT. 6 AND STAYS AT CURVE.) You quit followin' me! (LYMON STEPS ON MARVIN'S HEELS.) You hear?!

HENRY. Oh, let him be. He don't do no harm.

MARVIN. Followin' me around like some damn dog . . . Yippin' at my heels. "Marvin Macy; hello there, (CROSS TO LYMON, MOCK HIM.) Marvin Macy; Marvin Macy; Marvin Macy." Whyn't you get on back to your friend . . . jabber at her?

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, now, I ain't no trouble.

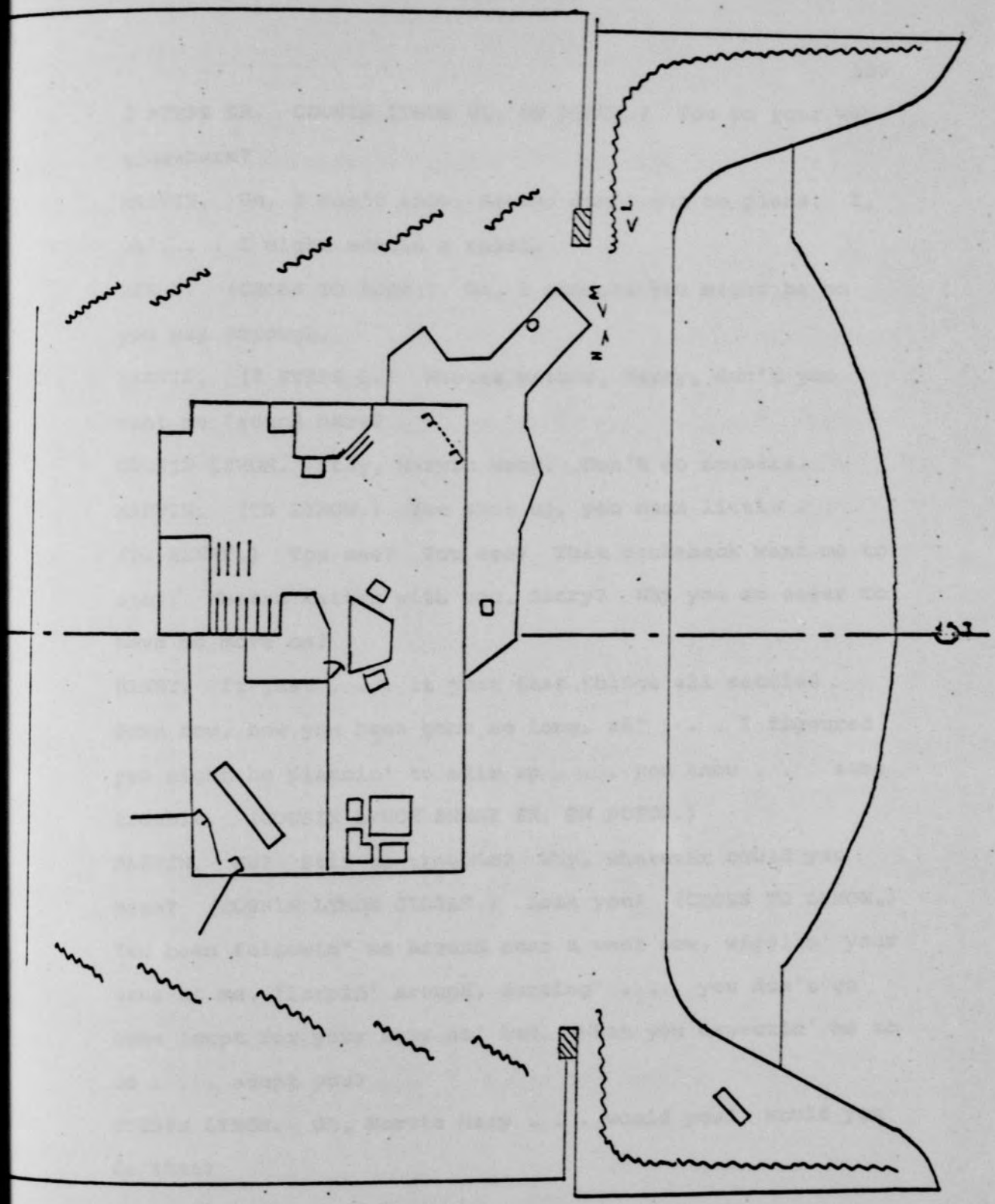
HENRY. Marvin. (CROSS TO MARVIN, HAND ON SHOULDER.) He don't do no harm. [PLATE IX.]

MARVIN. Damn brokeback, trailin' after me. (TO COUSIN LYMON.) What you want, anyway?

COUSIN LYMON. Oh . . . I, I don't want nothin'.

MARVIN. (CROSS C.) Damn bug.

HENRY. You . . . you passin' through, Marvin? (CROSS



2 STEPS SR. COUSIN LYMON UL. ON PORCH.) You on your way somewhere?

MARVIN. Oh, I don't know, Henry; don't got no plans. I, uh . . . I might settle a spell.

HENRY. (CROSS TO POST.) Oh, I thought you might be on you way through.

MARVIN. (2 STEPS L.) Whatsa matter, Henry, don't you want me 'round here?

COUSIN LYMON. Stay, Marvin Macy. Don't go nowhere.

MARVIN. (TO LYMON.) You shut up, you damn little . . . (TO HENRY.) You see? You see? That brokeback want me to stay. Whatsa matter with you, Henry? Why you so eager to have me move on?

HENRY. It just . . . it just that things all settled down now, now you been gone so long, an' . . . I figgured you might be plannin' to stir up . . . you know . . . some trouble. (COUSIN LYMON SNEAK SR. ON PORCH.)

MARVIN. Me? Stir up trouble? Why, whatever could you mean? (COUSIN LYMON GIGGLE.) Look you! (CROSS TO LYMON.) You been followin' me around near a week now, wigglin' your ears at me, flappin' around, dancing' . . . you don't go home 'cept for your eats an' bed. What you expectin' me to do . . . adopt you?

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, Marvin Macy . . . would you? Would you do that?

MARVIN. (TAKES A SWIPE AT HIM WHICH LYMON DUCKS EXPERTLY, LAUGHS.) Damn little lap dog.

HENRY. (1 STEP TO MARVIN.) An' . . . an' I hoped you wasn't plannin' to stir up no trouble.

MARVIN. (CROSS SC. LYMON 3 STEPS BEHIND.) Maybe just you tired of havin' me move in on you. That house of yours half mine, just like this place here, half mine you know, (TO HENRY.) but I 'spect you got so used to livin' there all by yourself you got a little selfish in your middle age.

HENRY. You welcome to stay long as you like.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO POST.) Or maybe you don't want no ex-convict hangin' around you. Well, I tell you somethin', Henry: I ain't quite sure why I come back, not that there ain't no scores to settle, but I ain't quite sure <u>why</u> I come back; just thought I'd have a look around.

HENRY. Miss Amelia . . .

MARVIN. (COUSIN LYMON CROSS TO SR. PORCH EDGE. MARVIN CROSS SRC.) Who said anythin' 'bout <u>her</u>? Hunh? I bring her up?

HENRY. Miss Amelia is . . . settled down, now; she is . . . she have Cousin Lymon with her . . . an' she got her cafe, an' . . . an' everythin' is quiet an' settled.

MARVIN. (CROSS TO HENRY.) Yeah, she got quite a business goin' for herself, hunh? She takin' in good money, I bet, hunh?

HENRY. (CROSS TO MARVIN.) Miss Amelia run the cafe for . . . us, for all of us: it be . . . it be a good place t o come. It be a special place for us. Important.

MARVIN. Yeah, an' it half mine, ain't it?

HENRY. Oh, Marvin!

MARVIN. She still my wife; don't you forget that!

HENRY. Oh, Marvin! That were years ago.

MARVIN. I know how long it were! I had lots of time to think about it! Lots of time rottin' in that penitentiary . . . all on account of her! On account of that one!!!

HENRY. That . . . that kinda think you can't blame on no one person, Marvin.

MARVIN. The hell I can't!! Who says?!

HENRY. It . . . it all long past now.

MARVIN. Yeah, but you got a lotta time to think on things when you in the penitentiary, Henry. (SIT SR. OF PORCH.) Ain't that right, peanut?

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, I ain't never been in the pen. (CROSS SR. 3 STEPS.)

MARVIN. Well, maybe you will be someday, peanut. Yeah, you get a lotta time to brood on things, Henry. An' . . . you know? You start makin' plans. Oh, all kindsa plans.

HENRY. Leave . . . leave everything be, Marvin. Let it rest.

MARVIN. (RISE ON LINE.) Well, you just keep to your own business, Henry, an' you let me worry on mine. All right?

HENRY. You . . . you always done what you wanted, Marvin.

MARVIN. Damn right, Henry; so you just let me go about my business. (CROSS TO LYMON: GRAB AROUND SHOULDER.) You just let <u>us</u> go about <u>our</u> business. (COUSIN LYMON AND MARVIN EXIT 2.)

COUSIN LYMON. Oh, yes, yes; oh, yes.

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER 5 AND INTO CAFE.) It was the beginning of the destruction. And the things that happened next were beyond description. (HENRY ENTERS CAFE AND SITS AT HIS TABLE SL. TOWNSMEN ENTER AS ANIMALS: AD LIB AS THEY ENTER DOORWAY OF CAFE. INSIDE CAFE NERVOUS CHATTER BY TOWNSMEN.) [PLATE X.]

EMMA. (EMMA AND MRS. PETERSON GET FOOD AT COUNTER, THEN GO TO SL. UNITS.) My, it sure is cheerful in here tonight . . . considerin' everythin'.

MACPHAIL. Oh, Emma.

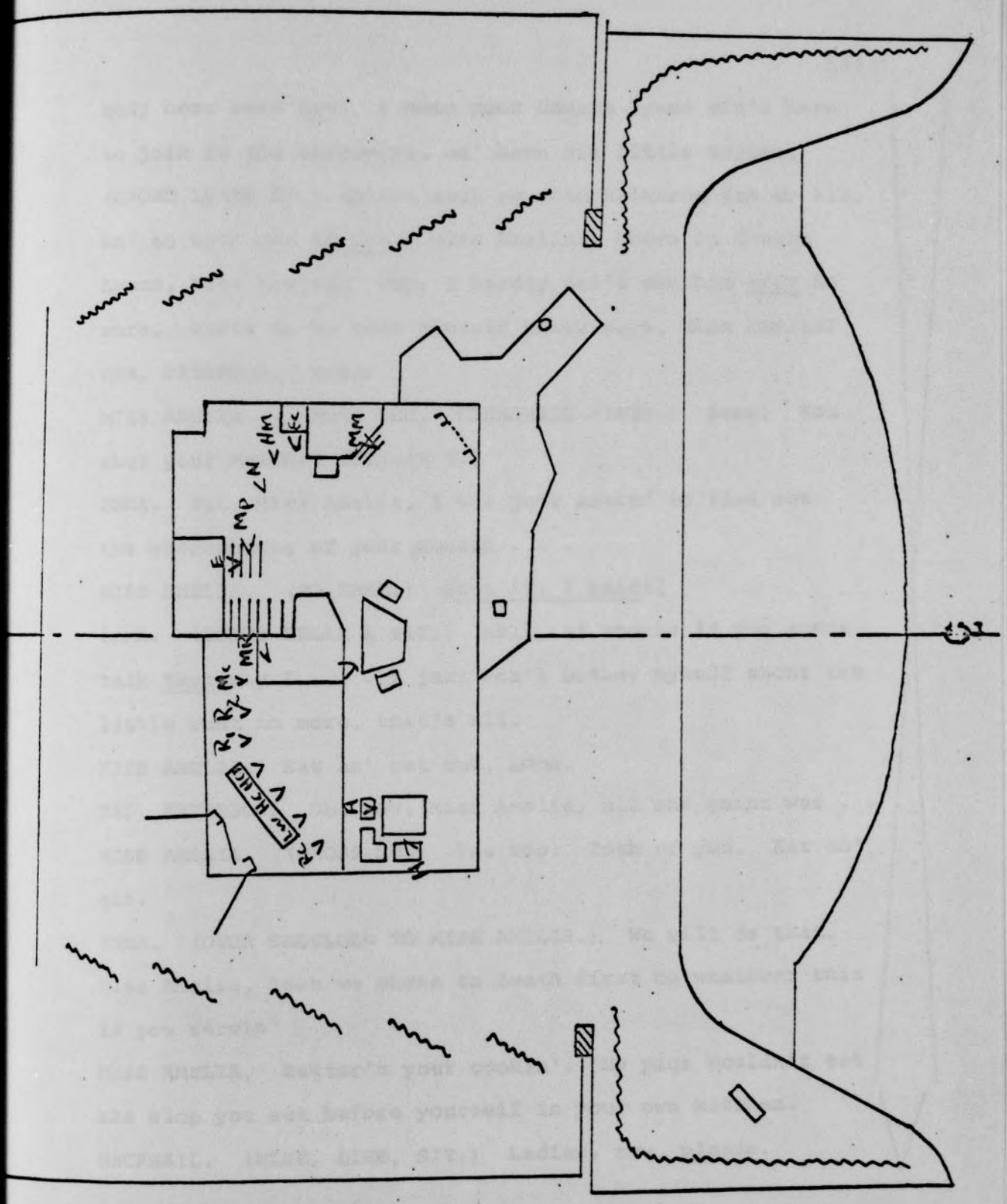
EMMA. Well, it do seem strange to me.

MISS AMELIA. (FROM LANDING.) What seem strange to you, Emma?

MRS. PETERSON. Now, Emma, watch yourself now.

MISS AMELIA. (2 STEPS DOWN.) What seem strange to you, Emma?

EMMA. Why it seem strange to me that . . . uh, that every-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body here save one. I mean poor Cousin Lymon ain't here to join in the merriment, an' have his little supper, (CROWD LEANS IN.) an' be such an entertainment for us all, an' to keep you company, Miss Amelia? Where is Cousin Lymon, Miss Amelia? Why, I hardly don't see him ever no more. Where do he keep himself these days, Miss Amelia?

MRS. PETERSON. Emma!

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS USC. CLENCHING FISTS.) Emma! You shut your mouth!! [Figure 4.]

EMMA. But, Miss Amelia, I was just askin' to find out the whereabouts of poor Cousin . . .

MISS AMELIA. (TO EMMA.) Shut it, I said!!

EMMA. (CROWD RELAX A BIT.) Well, of course if you gonna talk that way I . . . I just won't bother myself about the little runt no more, that's all.

MISS AMELIA. Eat an' get out, Emma.

MRS. PETERSON. Oh, now, Miss Amelia, all she meant was . .

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS SR.) You too. Both of you. Eat an' git.

EMMA. (OVER SHOULDER TO MISS AMELIA.) We will do that, Miss Amelia, lest we choke to death first on whatever this is you servin'

MISS AMELIA. Better'n your cookin'. My pigs wouldn't eat the slop you set before yourself in your own kitchen.

MACPHAIL. (RISE, LINE, SIT.) Ladies, now, please.

Fig. 4.--"Emma! You shut your mouth!!"

MISS AMELIA. She can't talk that way about the food in this cafe. (CROSS TO HENRY AT TABLE.) Evenin', Henry.

HENRY. Evenin', Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (SIT AT TABLE ON LINE.) You, uh . . . have you, uh . . . seen Cousin Lymon?

HENRY. Yeah, I have, Miss Amelia. He with Marvin, He with Marvin again.

MISS AMELIA. (RISE.) Eats or likker.

HENRY. I . . . I think I will just have a bottle, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS SL. OF COUNTER.) Suit yourself.

HENRY. They not far off, I wouldn't guess; they somewhere near here together.

MISS AMELIA. Huuh; couldn't care less. Don't make no matter to me. (CROSS BEHIND COUNTER.)

HENRY. I . . . I know.

EMMA. (LOUD.) What I find so remarkable is the way no one ain't allowed to talk about nothin' in this cafe, which is a public gatherin' place.

HENRY FORD CRIMP. Oh, Lord. (CROWD BEGINS TO FOCUS IN.)

MACPHAIL. Emma Hale, you been told to eat up an' get out.

EMMA. Stumpy McPhail, you go back to your boozin' an keep outa this. What I find so remarkable is that now Marvin Macy back in town our little Cousin Lymon spend all his time with him . . 'stead of with Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (BEFORE LINE CROSS TO HENRY'S TABLE: PUT BOTTLE ON TABLE. THEN CROSS TO EMMA: US. OF EMMA.) Emma? You remember that lawyer cheated me six-seven years back? The one tried to cheat me outa some land on a deed? You remember what I did to him?

EMMA. Why, now . . .

MACPHAIL. Why, you remember, Emma. Miss Amelia went at him, beat him up within an inch of his life. Broke his arm? An' he were big; an' he were a <u>man</u>.

MISS AMELIA. Don't let it be sid I wouldn't take my fist to a woman either . . . if she didn't keep her place.

MERLIE RYAN. Miss Amelia gonna kill Emma? She gonna kill her?

ELMIRA CLACKEN. No, Merlie; 'course not.

MERLIE RYAN. Don't see why not.

EMMA. (LOOK AT MISS AMELIA.) I . . . I ain't afraid of you.

MACPHAIL. Why don't you all simmer down.

EMMA. (TO MRS. PETERSON AND TOWNSPEOPLE.) I ain't afraid of her.

MRS. PETERSON. You crazy if you ain't.

HENRY FORD CRIMP. <u>That</u> sure.

EMMA. I put my faith in God!

MRS. PETERSON. Well . . . Amen.

MERLIE RYAN. Amen' Amen! (LYMON ENTERS SR. 5.)

EMMA. Well, here the little cockatoo now.

MACPHAIL. Evenin', Cousin Lymon. (COUSIN LYMON ENTERS CAFE: MARVIN CROSS TO PORCH POST. CROWD SIGH WHEN LYMON ENTERS.)

HENRY. Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. Evenin', Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO LYMON.) Well, where have you been, Cousin Lymon; I about give you up.

COUSIN LYMON. Ooohhh . . . been about; been wanderin' around. Havin' a little stroll an' a talk. My! Supper do smell good. (CROSS TO HENRY: POINTEDLY.) What we havin'?

MISS AMELIA. Uh . . . what, Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. (TO MISS AMELIA.) I say: What we havin' for supper!

MISS AMELIA. Oh! Oh, well, there be ham, an' winter peas, an' hominy grits, an' I brung out the peach preserves.

RAINEY 1. It be good.

RAINEY 2. Yeah, it be awful good.

COUSIN LYMON. Well, ain't that nice.

MISS AMELIA. You . . . you hungry now, Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. I mean ain't that nice . . . since we have a guest for dinner tonight. (THE CAFE BECOMES SILENT.) I have invited a special guest for dinner tonight.

MISS AMELIA. Yeah?

COUSIN LYMON. Yeah. C'mon in, now; Miss Amelia waitin'

on you. (MARVIN ENTERS FULL BACK IN DOOR FRAME: CROSS TO EMPTY TABLE C. SIT.)

MARVIN. Hey! Brokeback! Bring me my dinner!

MERLIE RYAN. Hey, Miss Amelia; Marvin Macy back. Miss Amelia!

MACPHAIL. Shut up, you damn fool.

EMMA. I never thought I'd live to see it. I tell you, I never thought I'd live to see it.

MERLIE RYAN. Miss Amelia? Marvin Macy back.

MARVIN. Hey, brokeback! My dinner!

COUSIN LYMON. Yes; yes, Marvin.

MISS AMELIA. Keep outa there.

COUSIN LYMON. Marvin want his dinner! (BEHIND COUNTER.)

MARVIN. Let him be.

MISS AMELIA. (ADVANCING TO MARVIN.) Look you!

MARVIN. (RISE: BOTH START TO CIRCLE TABLE.) Yeah?

COUSIN LYMON. You like grits, Marvin?

MARVIN. Pile 'em on.

MISS AMELIA. There some rat poison under the counter while you at it; put a little on for flavor.

MRS. PETERSON. I gonna faint.

EMMA. Hush!

MARVIN. I found that trap you set for me in the woods where I hunt. That woulda killed me good, wouldn't it?

MISS AMELIA. It woulda done the job.

MARVIN. Watch yourself.

COUSIN LYMON. Dinner! (CROSS TO MARVIN. MARVIN BREAKS CIRCLE FIRST AND SITS DOWN TO EAT.) Dinner! (MISS AMELIA GOES TO LEAN AT PORCH POST.)

HENRY. (LOOKS AT MARVIN: CROSS TO PORCH POST.) Miss Amelia? Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (LIKE A WOMAN.) Leave me be.

HENRY. He . . . he gonna move on soon. I know it.

MISS AMELIA. Yeah?

HENRY. Sure, he move on; ain't no place for him here.

MISS AMELIA. You sure, huuh?

HENRY. Sure. (HENRY AND MISS AMELIA COME BACK IN. NARRATOR GOES OUT ON PORCH, DS. OF POST.)

THE NARRATOR. (HENRY CROSS BACK TO TABLE. MISS AMELIA AT EDGE OF STAIRS. Oh, but Henry Macy was wrong, for Marvin did not move on. He stayed in the town, and every night the cafe was open he would arrive for dinner, and Cousin Lymon would wait on him, and bring him liquor for which he never paid a cent. And during these nights, which stretched into weeks, Miss Amelia did nothing. She did nothing at all, except to stand to one side and watch. (ACTION FOR FOLLOWING: MARVIN AND MISS AMELIA CIRCLE TABLE AND BACK TO POSITIONS.) But every night one thing would be sure to happen. Once every night, sometimes for no reason at all that anyone could see, Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy (MARVIN RISES

WHEN MISS AMELIA GETS TO CORNER OF TABLE.) would approach each other, their fists clenched, and they would circle one another, and it was during these rituals that the townspeople expected blows to be struck . . . but it never happened. All that ever happed was they would circle one another, and then move apart. Everyone knew that one time they would finally come to blows, that sooner or later Marvin Macy and Miss Amelia would fight; would set upon one another in a battle that would leave one of them brutally beaten or dead. But everyone also knew that it was not yet time. One night, though, nearly three months after Marvin Macy (LYMON CROSSES TO BEHIND COUNTER.) returned to town, there occurred an event which set the sure course to calamity.

MISS AMELIA. (FROM 2 STEPS UP.) You finally movin' on.

MARVIN. Yeah?

MISS AMELIA. Well, you all packed.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSS FROM COUNTER WITH SUITCASE.) Amelia! Marvin Macy is goin' to visit a spell with us.

MISS AMELIA. I don't understant you, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. (POINTED. CROSS TO HER AT STEP EDGE.) I said: Marvin Macy is goin' to visit a spell with us. He is goin' to move in here. He is gonna live here. With us.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS TO MARVIN.) Ain't no room.

MARVIN. Ain't no room, huh?

MISS AMELIA. This ain't no flop house . . . for convicts.

MARVIN. Cousin Lymon? They ain't no room for me?

COUSIN LYMON. Amelia! Amelia, I think I told you Marvin Macy is gonna (CROSS BETWEEN THEM.) live with us here.

MISS AMELIA. But . . . but, Cousin Lymon . . .

COUSIN LYMON. Marvin Macy will sleep in (CROSS: GET SUITCASE: GO UP SEVERAL STEPS.) your Papa's big bed, an' we will move what you have referred to as my coffin--my tiny bed--into your room (UP MORE STEPS.) . . . an' you . . . an' . . . an' you, Amelia (UP MORE STEPS.) . . . well, you can pull a mattress, an' sleep by the stove down here.

HENRY. Lord God in Heaven.

MISS AMELIA. (TRYING TO SPEAK.) Arrggh . . . uh, uh, arrggh.

COUSIN. LYMON. So, you see, Amelia, there is room, after all. It merely a question of makin space.

MACPHAIL. I think I goin' home.

MRS. HASTY MALONE. Think you right.

COUSIN LYMON. So! Now I think Marvin an' I move upstairs an' get things arranged comfortable, Marvin?

MARVIN. (LOOK AT MISS AMELIA: LAUGH: GO UP.) Comin'.

(MARVIN MACY FOLLOWS COUSIN LYMON UP THE STAIRS. TOWNSPEOPLE LEAVE THROUGH DOOR: ANIMATED--TENSE. MISS AMELIA CROSS TO

PORCH POST. HENRY CROSS DIRECTLY BEHIND HER.)

MISS AMELIA. Henry?

HENRY. Yes, Miss Amelia. (ALL SPEECHES SLOWLY RESPONDED TO NOW.)

MISS AMELIA. I gotta do it now.

HENRY. Do . . . what, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. I gotta get your brother.

HENRY. Yes.

MISS AMELIA. I gotta drive him off, or kill him, or . . .

HENRY. I know.

MISS AMELIA. But if I do that . . .

HENRY. If you do that, what?

MISS AMELIA. If I drive him off then . . . then Cousin Lymon go off with him.

HENRY. Oh, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA. (CROSS SR. ON PORCH.) He would! I'd a done it long before now . . . 'cept . . .

HENRY. 'Cept you think Cousin Lymon go off too; go off with him?

MISS AMELIA. Unh-huuh.

HENRY. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA: THEN LINE.) But . . . but do it matter that much?

MISS AMELIA. (LOOKING AT HIM FINALLY.) Cousin Lymon go off . . . I all alone. (SHOW LOVE.)

HENRY. He ain't . . . much comfort, Cousin Lymon.

MISS AMELIA. He some. He been some. I gonna get your brother, Henry.

HENRY. All right. (START TO TOUCH HER: STOP.) Night, Miss Amelia. (MOVE TOWARD EXIT 5.)

MISS AMELIA. Night, Henry.

HENRY. (TURNING TO AMELIA.) Ain't nothin' I can do?

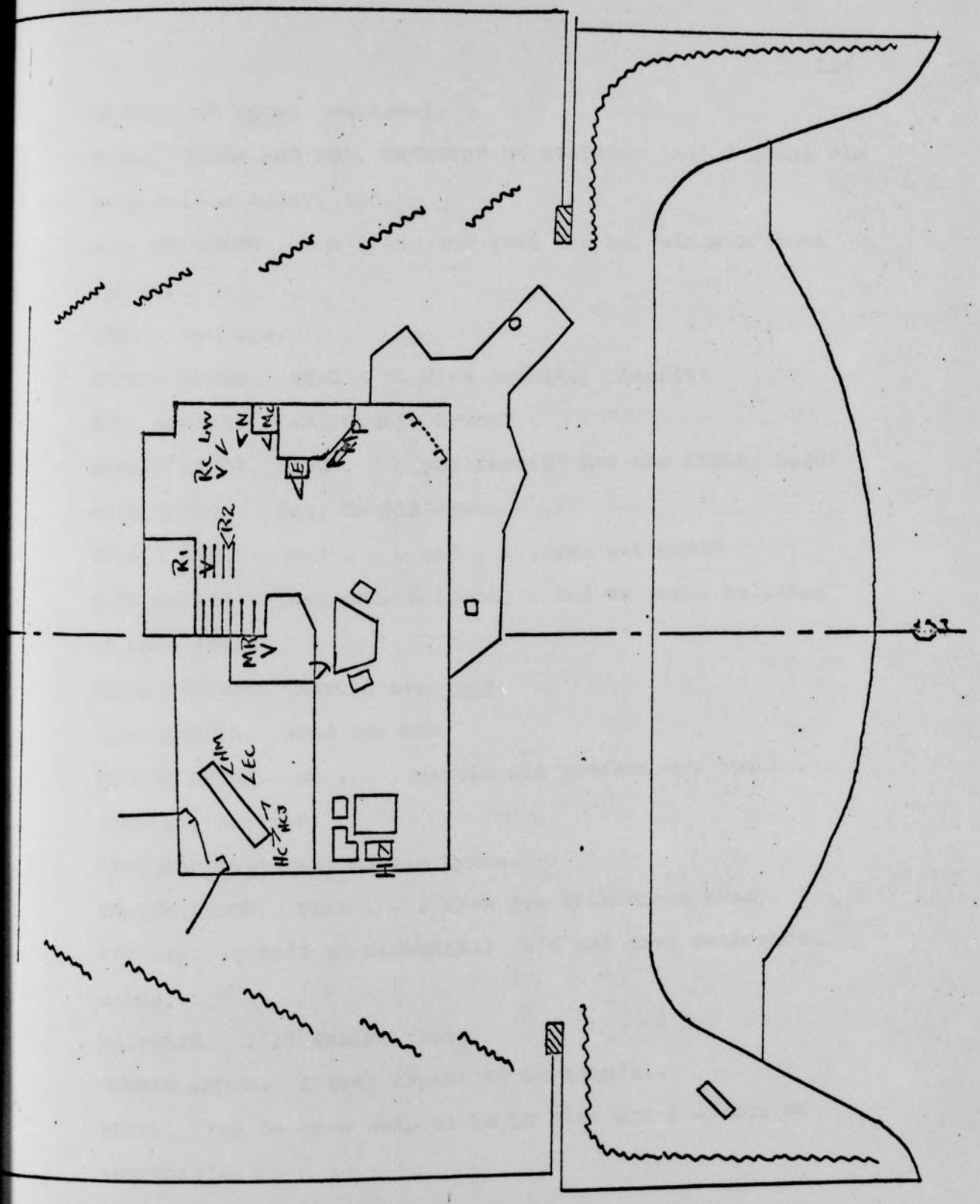
MISS AMELIA. (AT DOOR.) No, ain't nothin', Henry.

HENRY. No. Well . . . night. (EXIT 5.)

MISS AMELIA. Night, Henry. (ENTER CAFE: SIT SR. UNIT.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER 2. CROSS TO PORCH POST.) And the fight, which everybody had expected (MARVIN AND COUSIN LYMON COME DOWN STEPS TO SL. UNIT.) but nobody had known exactly when it would happed, took place, when it finally occurred, on Ground Hog's Day. And it was at the same time both a solemn and festive occasion. (TOWNSPEOPLE ENTER IN ANIMATION: CIRCUS.) Bets had been placed--with Emma Hale's money going on Marvin Macy, of course. And Miss Amelia had sat down to rest her strength for the fight, and Marvin Macy sat nearby with a tin can of hog fat between his knees and carefully greased his arms and legs. Everybody knew, and they did not need Cousin Lymon as their clarion--though, of course, they could not stop him. (COUSIN LYMON CROSS TO CROWD--NOISE FROM STOOL JUMP.) [PLATE XI.]

COUSIN LYMON. (TO PEOPLE.) Today! It gonna be today!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HENRY. We know! We know!

EMMA. (EMMA AND MRS. PETERSON ON STAIRS.) An' I gonna win me a dollar today, too.

MRS. PETERSON. Don't see how that can be, since I gonna win one.

EMMA. You see.

COUSIN LYMON. (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA.) Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Yes, Cousin Lymon?

COUSIN LYMON. You . . . you restin' for the fight, huuh?

MISS AMELIA. Yes, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. An' . . . an' . . . you eat good?

MISS AMELIA. Yes, Cousin Lymon; I had me three helpings of rare roast.

COUSIN LYMON. Marvin ate four.

MISS AMELIA. Good for him.

COUSIN LYMON. He . . . Marvin all greased up. You . . . greased, Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. Yes, Cousin Lymon.

COUSIN LYMON. Then . . . then you both about ready, I . . . I'd say. (CROSS TO MACPHAIL.) I'd say they both about ready.

MACPHAIL. I'll decide that.

COUSIN LYMON. I just tryin' to be helpful.

HENRY. You be more helpful to go hide under a log, or somethin'.

MACPHAIL. (CROSS TO MARVIN.) You all fixed an' ready, Marvin?

MARVIN. Never been readier!

MACPHAI. (2 STEPS TO MISS AMELIA.) You . . . you all ready, Miss Amelia?

MISS AMELIA. I been ready for years.

MACPHAIL. (CROSS C.) Well, then you two c'mere. (MISS AMELIA AND MARVIN CROSS C. TOWNSPEOPLE CLEAR FURNITURE AWAY.)

MERLIE RYAN. What . . . what gonna happen?

EMMA. Marvin Macy gonna kill Miss Amelia, Merlie; that what gonna happen.

MRS. PETERSON. Other way 'round!

MERLIE RYAN. Why . . . why they gonna fight?

LUCY WILLINS. Hush you.

MERLIE RYAN. I wanna know why. I wanna know why Marvin an' Miss Amelia gonna kill t'other.

HENRIETTA FORD CRIMP, JR. 'Cause they know each other, Merlie.

MERLIE RYAN. 'Tain't no good reason.

EMMA. It gonna have to do.

MACPHAIL. Got knives, either of you?

MISS AMELIA AND MARVIN. Nope.

MACPHAIL. I gotta check anyway. (HE FEELS INTO MARVIN'S BACK POCKETS.) You clean.

MARVIN. What you think I be . . . a liar?

MACPHAIL. Knives has a way of slippin' into pockets sometimes without a person knowin' about 'em Marvin. You musta seen a lot of that in your time.

MARVIN Yeah?

MISS AMELIA. Come on!

MARVIN. Oh, I can't wait.

MACPHAIL. All right! All right, now. (MACPHAIL DROPS HANDS.) All right! Begin! (THE FIGHT IS CHOREOGRAPHED, WITHOUT ACTUALLY MAKING THE BLOWS CONTACT BUT APPEARING SO. THEY CIRCLE FOR A MOMENT, AND THEN BOTH STRIKE OUT SIMULTANEOUSLY, WITHOUT WARNING. THE CROWD IS MAKING GROTESQUE MOVEMENTS IN THE BACKGROUND AS IF TO MAKE THE WHOLE MORE VICIOUS; MORE ABSURD. [Figure 5.] THEY CIRCLE MORE: MISS AMELIA HITS MARVIN IN THE STOMACH. HE STAGGERS BACKWARDS. MARVIN STRIKES A BLOW, SENDING MISS AMELIA SPIRALING TOWARDS COUNTER. THEY CIRCLE MORE. THEY IN-FIGHT. THE FIGHT CHANGES FROM BOXING TO WRESTLING. THE SOUNDS HEARD, IN ADDITION TO THE MUSIC, ARE THE SOUNDS OF THROATY-GUTTY AGONIZING BREATHS AND GROANS. THE FIGHTERS BATTLE MUSCLE TO MUSCLE BRACED AGAINST EACH OTHER. MISS AMELIA GAINS THE ADVANTAGE AND INCH BY INCH SHE BENDS MARVIN BACKWARDS, FORCING HIM TO HIS KNEES. COUSIN LYMON IS ON TOP OF THE TABLE EXTREMELY AGITATED. FINALLY MISS AMELIA HAS MARVIN FULLY TO HIS KNEES AND STRADDLE HIM, HER HAND

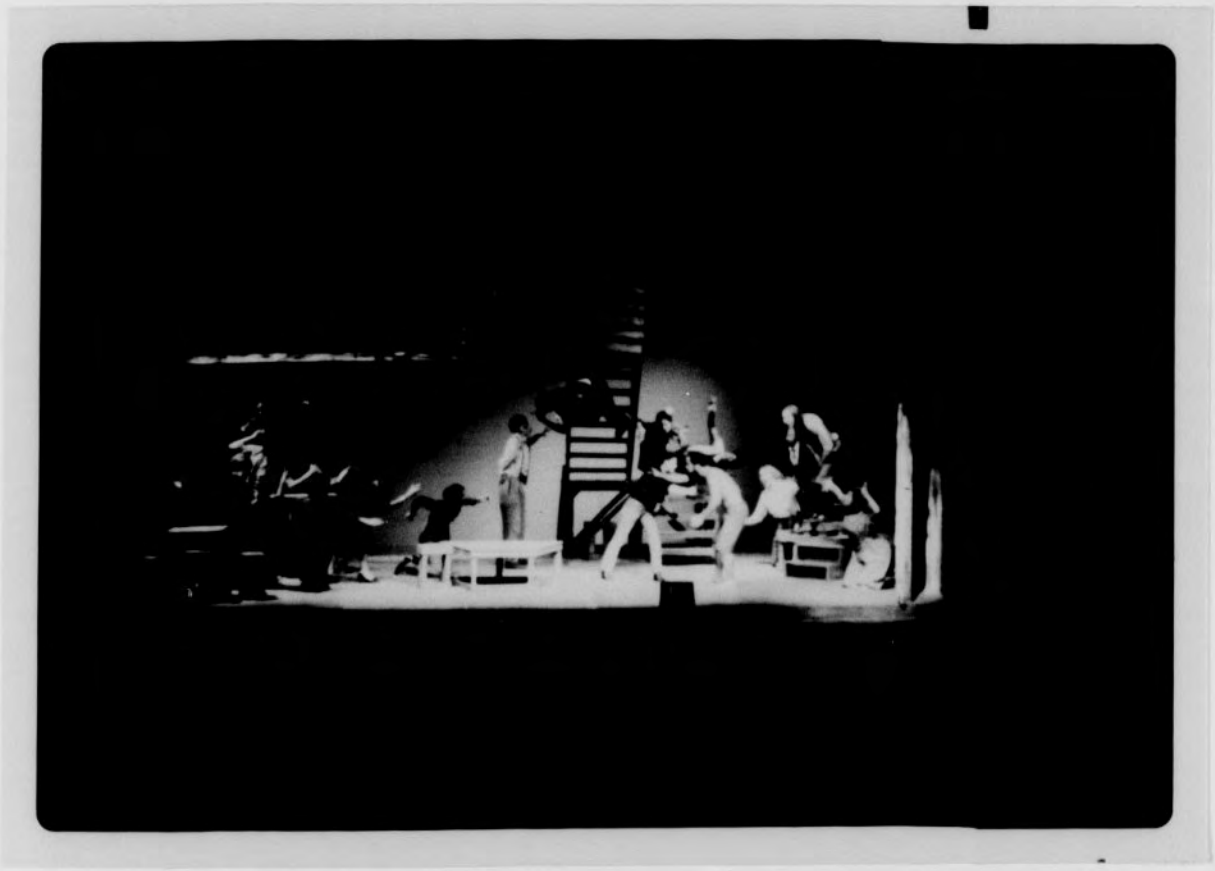

Fig. 5.--The fight scene

ON HIS THROAT.)

MRS. PETERSON. Kill him! Kill him!

MERLIE RYAN. Kill him! Kill him!

COUSIN LYMON. (UNABLE TO STAND ANY MORE, WITH HALF A SHRIEK, HALF A WORD, LEAPS THROUGH THE AIR TO LAND ON MISS AMELIA'S BACK FORCING HER TO RELEASE THE HOLD ON MARVIN.)

HENRY. Stop him!

EMMA. Get her! Get her!

(MISS AMELIA, STUNNED, HAS FALLED TO THE FLOOR. MARVIN STRADDLES MISS AMELIA, BEATS HER SENSELESS, EXCESSIVELY, KICKS HER AND MOVES FROM THE PROSTRATE FORM OF MISS AMELIA. HE BREATHES HEAVILY, STANDS OVER HER BARELY ABLE TO STAND, HIMSELF.) [PLATE XII.]

HENRY. Oh, Lord, no.

EMMA. Poor, Miss Amelia, Poor . . . (CROSS TO MISS AMELIA AND KNEELS ON LINE.)

HENRY. Leave her be. (COUSIN LYMON CRAWLS TO MARVIN AND EMBRACES HIM AROUND THE WAIST. [Figure 6.] ALL TOWNS-PEOPLE FILE PAST MISS AMELIA'S BODY. ALL LEAVE BUT MARVIN, HENRY, LYMON. HENRY FINALLY STARTS TO LEAVE.)

MARVIN. 'Bye, Henry.

HENRY. 'Bye, Marvin.

COUSIN LYMON. 'Bye, Henry. (HENRY EXITS 6.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTERS TO CURVE OF EXT. 6.) Marvin Macy and Cousin Lymon left town that night, but before they went

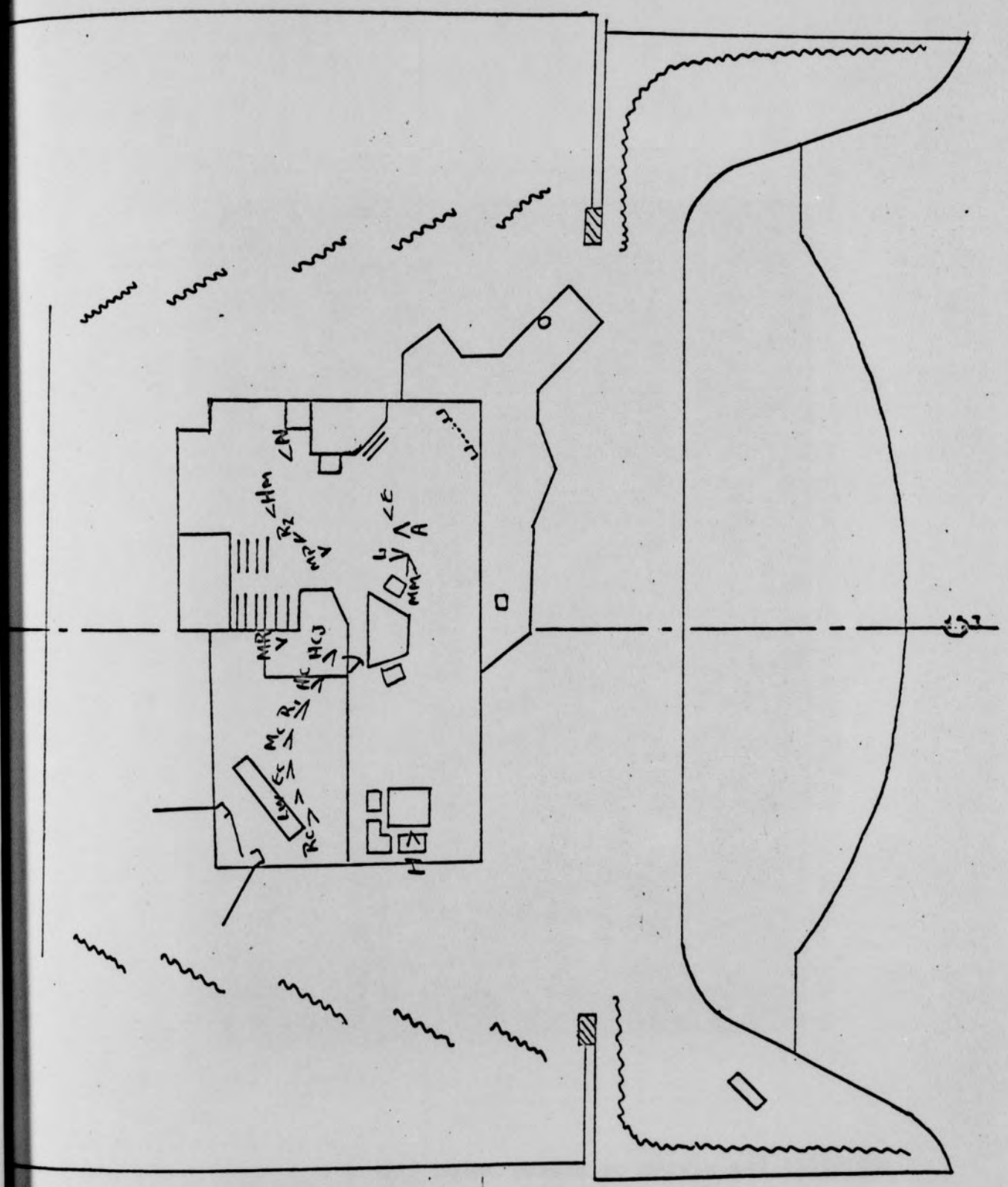
MR
HCJ
Rc
Lwr Ec
Rc
MM
A

Fig. 6.--Cousin Lymon crawls to Marvin and embraces him around the waist.

away, they did their best to wreck the store. They took what money there was in the cafe, and the few curios and pieces of jewelry Miss Amelia kept upstairs; and they carved vile words on the cafe tables. After they had done all this . . . they left town . . . together. (EXIT 6.)

MARVIN. C'mon, peanut; (MARVIN AND COUSIN LYMON EXIT USR. let's go. (MISS AMELIA IS LEFT ALONE ON STAGE. SHE BEGINS HER CRAWL UP THE STAIRS, GETS TO THE LANDING, HOWLS.)

THE NARRATOR. (ENTER SR. PROSC.) And every night thereafter, for three years, Miss Amelia sat on the steps, alone and silent, looking down the road and waiting. But Cousin Lymon never returned. Nothing more was ever heard of Marvin Macy or Cousin Lymon. (MRS. PETERSON ENTER USR. DOOR, CROSS SL. OF COUNTER.) The cafe, of course, never reopened, and life in the town was that much drearier. And Miss Amelia closed the general store, as well, or it would be more correct to say that she discouraged anyone from coming there anymore.

MRS. PETERSON. Miss Amelia? I . . . I wondered . . . I thought I would buy a coke.

MISS AMELIA. (SITTING ON LANDING STEPS.) Sure, that will be a dollar and five cents.

MRS. PETERSON. But . . . but a coke be a nickel.

MISS AMELIA. Yes. Five cents for the coke, and a dollar

for seein' me. A dollar for lookin' at the freak.

MRS. PETERSON. Oh . . . Miss Amelia . . . (EXIT USR. DOOR. MISS AMELIA ALONE ON STAGE.)

THE NARRATOR. And at the end of three years, Miss Amelia went indoors one night, (MISS AMELIA FOLLOWS ACTION HERE.) climbed the stairs, and never again left her upstairs room. The town is dreary. On August afternoons the road is empty, white with dust, and the sky above is bright as glass. (DURING SPEECH, NARRATOR CROSS ALL WAY SR., GO BACK TO END OF PORCH POST AND FINALLY EXIT USL.) If you walk along the main street there's nothing whatsoever to do. Nothing moves--there are no children's voices, only the hum of the mill. Though sometimes, in the late afternoon, when the heat is at its worst, a hand will slowly open the shutter of the window up there, and a face will look down at the town . . . a terrible dim face . . . like the faces known in dreams. The face will linger at the window for an hour or so, then the shutters will be closed once more, and as likely as not there will not be another soul to be seen along the main street. Heat . . . and silence. There is nothing whatsoever to do. You might as well walk down to the Fork Falls Road and watch the chain gang. The twelve mortal men . . . who are together. The Ballad of the Sad Cafe . . . the end.

PART III. CRITICAL EVALUATION

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Four areas will be discussed in this critical evaluation. They are: (1) The relationship of the interpretation to the final product by comparing what was desired with how well it was accomplished; (2) The evaluation of actor-director relationships by analyzing the specific problems which occurred in working with the actors; (3) The evaluation of the audience reaction to the production; and (4) The conclusion of this evaluation with pertinent personal observations which will serve to tie together the foregoing coverage.

The relationship of the interpretation to the final production

This director feels that his interpretation of man isolated in space and trying to make sense out of a senseless position was successfully achieved. This achievement of interpretation was demonstrated by the close relationship of the principles of Absurdist Theatre as already established in this thesis. Furthermore, the mood of isolation was carried out through the employment of an eclectic style of production, demonstrated by the use of an unrealistic set in which real and sometimes symbolic characters performed.

This interpretation was strengthened, the director believes, through certain additions and deletions to the script. After becoming thoroughly familiar with the script, and after conferring with the designer, the director deleted all of the stage directions offered by the playwright with the exception of entrances and exits. Some of the entrances and exits were changed: specifically those of the Narrator. Instead of having this character exit, the director incorporated the Narrator into the characters within the cafe, thereby causing him to exit as the Narrator but retaining him on stage as one of the townspeople.

Undoubtedly, the greatest change from the playwright's directons was the fight scene between Miss Amelia and Marvin Macy. Once the director realized that the situation that enveloped the characters was to be climaxed in a fight between these two individuals, he intuitively visualized the scene to be developed through dance. A chreographer was employed, a music score was written, and the scene came to life. It is because of the eclectic style of production and the particular changes in the script, alone with some minor word changes, that the director believes the interpretation of the final product was most successfully accomplished in accordance with what he set out to do.

Actor-director relationships

The director feels fortunate in that only two problem areas, both tangent to each other, occurred during this production. These areas involve the casting and the continuation of the cast in their roles.

Because of the previous experience in working with student actors, the director knew that after an actor is once cast, the actor may not be able to achieve the characterization necessary with the other members of the cast. The actor may need to be eliminated from the cast. In order to counter the first area, the director established a ground rule that the roles cast were, for the time being, tentative; that possible changes may be made. This rule was told to all the candidates prior to audition and was accepted by them. The second area, that of eliminated cast members, is usually more difficult to handle. The director, however, was fortunate in that some fifty students and townspeople came to audition. He was able, therefore, to select those individuals on the basis of the potential to inter-change roles. In other words, the director double-cast the roles within the selected cast.

The director found that after the third rehearsal, the member cast as Marvin Macy was unable to follow the script as well as the directions given and that he just didn't seem to "fit." An immediate change was made, there-

by causing the proper quality of characterization that was felt necessary by the director.

As the rehearsals continued, various members were eliminated for a variety of reasons, including: failure to attend rehearsals without a legitimate pre-arranged reason, illness, or academic pressures. Immediate changes were made without jeopardizing the quality of the production. Figures 7, 8, and 9 illustrate these cast changes.

The director had a company of dedicated artists. This feeling may have been due to the fact that the director believed in the play and the company. This belief was frequently related to the company by actually telling them and also by adopting many of their suggestions as they applied to establishment of character. The director encouraged the members to find positive motivating influences for their individual characters and to the situations in which the characters were involve. The method of recall and observation was suggested for use by the company. In employing this method, the individuals were asked to recall events or persons and to use these images in the development of character and situation. The members were asked to go out and observe people. If, in their observations, a manner of speaking, a particular movement, or an interesting situation was seen, the members could try to work these observations into their characters. The director, however, maintained

NARRATOR	CHARLES MARTIN
RAINEY 1	BRIAN BROWNLEY
RAINEY 2	CHRIS SLACK
STUMPY McPHAIL	JOHN CLONTZ
HENRY MACY	JIM BURROUGHS
MISS AMELIA	AMELIA PENLAND
COUSIN LYMON	CRAIG SPRADLEY
EMMA HALE	SHANNON CAMPBELL
MRS. PETERSON	CATHERINE HARRY
MARVIN MACY	STEVE ELROD
MERLIE RYAN	RANDY BALL
HORACE WELLS	JERRY COLBERT
HENRY FORD CRIMP	STEVE THRIFT
ROSSER CLINE	JOHN MORROW
LUCY WILLINS	KAREN WOLFE
MRS. HASTY MALONE	LINDA FINK
HENRIETTA FORD CRIMP, JR.	SYBIL ROSEN
TOWNSPEOPLE	MARY LOU SMITH
	BARRY BELL
	MITCHELL GRAYSON

Fig. 7.--Beginning cast list

NARRATOR	CHARLES MARTIN
RAINEY 1	BRIAN BROWNLEY
RAINEY 2	JOHN CLONTZ
STUMPY McPHAIL	STEVE ELROD
HENRY MACY	JIM BURROUGHS
MISS AMELIA	AMELIA PENLAND
COUSIN LYMON	CRAIG SPRADLEY
EMMA HALE	SHANNON CAMPBELL
MRS. PETERSON	CATHERINE HARRY
MARVIN MACY	RANDY BALL
HORACE WELLS	JERRY COLBERT
MERLIE RYAN	STEVE THRIFT
ROSSER CLINE	JOHN MORROW
LUCY WILLINS	KAREN WOLFE
MRS. HASTY MALONE	LINDA FINK
HENRIETTA FORD CRIMP, JR.	SYBIL ROSEN
TOWNSPEOPLE	MARY LOU SMITH
	BARRY BELL
	MITCHELL GRAYSON

Fig. 8.--First cast change

NARRATOR	CHARLES MARTIN
RAINEY 1	BARRY BELL
RAINEY 2	JOHN CLONTZ
STUMPY McPHAIL	STEVE ELROD
HENRY MACY	JIM BURROUGHS
MISS AMELIA	AMELIA PENLAND
COUSIN LYMON	CRAIG SPRADLEY
EMMA HALE	SHANNON CAMPBELL
MRS. PETERSON	CATHERINE HARRY
MERLIE RYAN	STEVE THRIFT
MARVIN MACY	RANDY BALL
HENRY FORD CRIMP	JOHN MORROW
HENRIETTA FORD CRIMP, JR.	SYBIL ROSEN
LUCY WILLINS	KAREN WOLFE
MRS. HASTY MALONE	LINDA FINK
ROSSER CLINE	MITCHELL GRAYSON
ELMIRA CLACKEN	MARY LOU SMITH

Fig. 9.--Final cast list

the authority to either accept, reject, or modify any of these developments. The director believes that a very successful actor-director relationship resulted.

Audience reaction

The first area of reaction to be discussed will be the impact that the production had on the audience. The director does not know specifically whether the publicity given to the production or the name Edward Albee was responsible for the full houses at each performance. Perhaps it may have been a combination of the two. Regardless of the specific reason, the director feels that such response is primary evidence of a favorable impact upon the audience. Greater and more specific evidence is shown in the critics' reviews and in the written and verbal sentiments of the audience.

Dorothy Benjamin, The Greensboro Record Staff Writer said:

> When William Dannenberg chose Edward Albee's compelling drama, "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe," for his master's thesis production he bit off a large chunk of theatre. He chewed it well. "Sad Cafe," Albee's poignant and powerful play . . . is well directed and well acted. The homosexual overtones are obvious but not obnoxious. "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe" provided an interesting and provocative evening of theatre.[34]

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[34]Dorothy Benjamin, "'Sad Cafe' Pins Medal on Dannenberg's Chest," The Greensboro Record, Jan. 10, 1970, sec. A, p. 7.

Jim McAllister, The Greensboro Daily News Entertainment Editor stated:

> The UNC-G Theatre has never staged--at least not while I've been watching them--a more compelling show than Edward Albee's "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe," which opened Friday night in Taylor Theatre.
>
> The play runs for more than two hours without an intermission--and yet the action is so sustaining, the interest is so drawn to the happenings on stage, that the thought os a pause never enters the mind of the onlooker.
>
> No one familiar with the plays of Edward Albee should be surprised with the pervading anti-female theme of the thing . . . that woman, knowingly or otherwise, are castrators. In "The Ballad of the Sad Cafe" he goes a step further and lets the homosexual emerge the victor.
>
> The play was directed with explosive energy by William Dannenberg. I especially enjoyed the way he choreographed the concluding fight scene between Amelia and Marvin.[35]

Further evidence of favorable impact may be found in a note received after the final performance.

> Gentlemen:
>
> We attended the matinee yesterday of "Ballad" and I was so moved and impressed in the performance that I have to tell you how superb an afternoon of theatre that was.
>
> Most sincerely,
> Cele Levine

The director believes this reaction to be true generally of the entire audience. Many comments of a similar nature were heard from groups of people standing around

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[35]Jim McAllister, "'Sad Cafe' in Taylor Theatre is a Most 'Compelling' Show," The Greensboro Daily News, Jan. 10, 1970, sec. B, p. 10.

after the performances. The impact of the favorable criticism leads the director to believe that he achieved the desired response from the audience.

The director wanted the audience to become involved in the situation that was being presented to them. He wanted the onlookers to laugh at the senselessness of man and then to have that laughter abruptly cease as realization of the seriousness of the situation that began the laughter became clear. This was achieved.

The director also confronted the audience with actions that lacked apparent motivation and with happenings that were clearly outside the realm of rational experience. He expected them to ask the relevant question, "What is happening? What does the action of the play represent?" And these questions were asked.

The director discussed at length with members of the audience after the performances several of the actions which lacked apparent motivation: the reason for Amelia's marriage to Marvin; the reason for Marvin's submission to Lymon's sexual desires, implied in their final scene; the perceptiveness of crazy Merlie Ryan; and the deep love of Amelia for the repulsive, prissy, humpbacked homosexual.

Outside the realm of rational experience was the fight between Amelia and Marvin. The director, however, heard the desired response from the implosion of breaths

and from the grunts of the audience as the two characters hit ans slashed at each other. And, following the fight, in the final scene between Miss Amelia and Mrs. Peterson, sniffles of pity--not sympathy--were heard. The director feels that the audience responses were the appropriate ones.

Personal observations

The most pertinent and personal observation made by the director concerns the absolute loyalty and dedication given by the company. As a group, the members requested that the rehearsals be closed, not because they would have been inhibited by those who may have been present, but because they were making every effort to perfect the production. They were carefully digging deeply into character motivation and revelation. They were working hard to develop a feeling of ensemble. They were so completely involved in the perfection of their art that they believed the impact, the interpretation, and the response should be reserved for the actual performances. Perhaps the following poem by Steve Thrift (Merlie Ryan) best sums up the feeling of the company:

for Merlie...
and remembrances of things past

the child is father to the man

the dome of the gray sky shelters — storm coming
touching the sap of the pines — fingers dirty
carefully, knowingly, following the ant — must learn
knees meshed into drab earth — not to giggle
wet eyes wondering at all — too much

the child is father to the man

the wilderness is not far from home — rain-barrel
hearing the mud squeeze through the toes — hard to climb
running, walking, then running again — must see
clothes that merely keep the body covered — her
tongue darting quickly across dry lips — figuring

the child is father to the man

the store stretches up from the red dirt — dog asleep
listening to the witch women cackle — under the porch
watching, gazing as men spit on the road — no one
all the blackies bunching up together outside — yelling
some nasty children pointing, snickering — at him

the child is father to the man

gathered are the twisted faces of ignorance — lying
waiting
rapid glimpses of bottles, tables, seats, — on the floor
dirt and age
unavoidable odors of liquor, sweat, anguish — a tear
sounds of flesh crushed, split, scream in — tastes a lot
ears
fierce animals breathing, moving, shouting — like salt

the child is father to the man

and the soul of man is sensitive — they forget
it seldom forgets — I know
just as the child — I
remembers — remember
almost everything — everything

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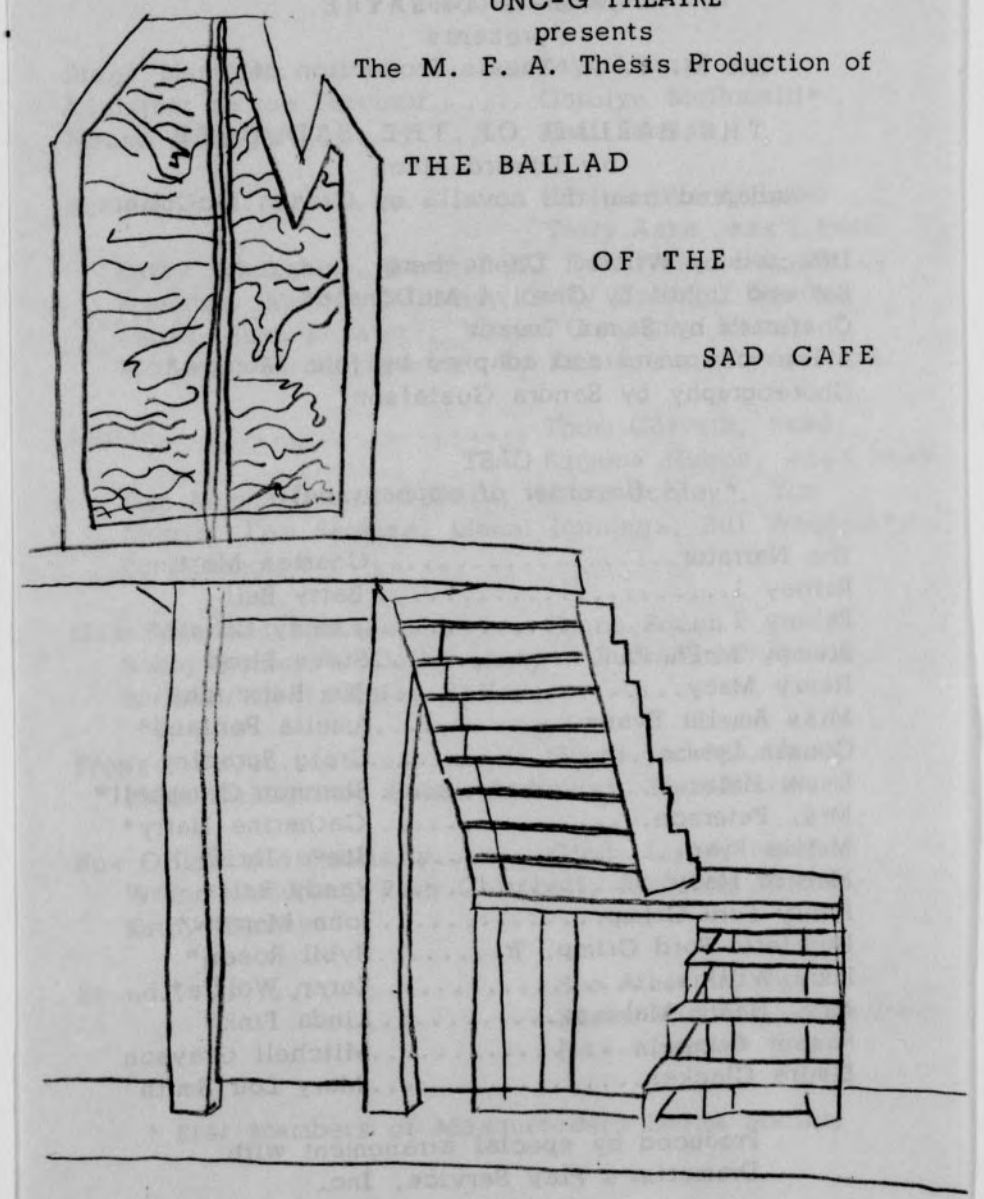
APPENDIX

UNC-G THEATRE
presents
The M. F. A. Thesis Production of

THE BALLAD

OF THE

SAD CAFE



UNC-G THEATRE
presents
The M. F. A. Thesis Production of

THE BALLAD OF THE SAD CAFE
by Edward Albee
adapted from the novella by Carson McCullers

Directed by William Dannenberg
Set and lights by Carolyn McDonald*
Costumes by Susan Tucker
Music composed and adapted by John Morrow*
Choreography by Sandra Gustafson

CAST
(in order of appearance)

The Narrator.....Charles Martin
Rainey 1..... Barry Bell
Rainey 2.....Johnny Clontz*
Stumpy McPhail.....Steve Elrod
Henry Macy..... Jim Burroughs
Miss Amelia Evans.....Amelia Penland*
Cousin Lymon.....Craig Spradley
Emma Hale..... Shannon Campbell*
Mrs. Peterson..... Catherine Harry*
Merlie Ryan..... Steve Thrift
Marvin Macy..... Randy Ball*
Henry Ford Crimp..... John Morrow*
Henrietta Ford Crimp, Jr.....Sybil Rosen*
Lucy Willins..... Karen Wolffe*
Mrs. Hasty Malone..... Linda Fink*
Rosser Cline.....Mitchell Grayson
Elmira Clacken.....Mary Lou Smith

Produced by special arrangment with
Dramatist's Play Service, Inc.

PRODUCTI

Stage Manager.....K
Assistant to the Director..... C
House Manager..... F

Scenery.....C

Kathy Brookshire, Barry Bell,
Kraeuter, Marcia Garland, Ge
Keller, Jean Lasater*, Wrenn
Withers, Sandre Greene, Ed

Lights..... T

Tom Kenyon Frank O'Neill, M
Morris, Dan Seaman, Genni
Ed Pilkington.

Costumes and Make-up..... I
Bobby Bodford*, Cathy Harry*
Barbara Baker, Betsy Bailey.

Props.....C
Mary DeMartino, Susan Andre

Box Office and Publicity.....C
Wrenn Goodrum, Ruth Campbe
Kathy Garrity.

Sound.....

* Full Members of Masquera

HEATRE
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Production of

THE SAD CAFE
Albee
lla by Carson McCullers

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appearance)

.....Charles Martin
..... Barry Bell
.....Johnny Clontz*
.....Steve Elrod
..... Jim Burroughs
.....Amelia Penland*
.....Craig Spradley
..... Shannon Campbell*
..... Catherine Harry*
..... Steve Thrift
..... Randy Ball*
..... John Morrow*
.....Sybil Rosen*
..... Karen Wolffe*
.....Linda Fink*
.....Mitchell Grayson
.....Mary Lou Smith

l arrangment with
ervice, Inc.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager.....Kay Cortez*
Assistant to the Director..... Carolyn McDonald*
House Manager..... Hall Parrish

Scenery..... Carlton Ward, head
Terry Ashe, ass't head
Kathy Brookshire, Barry Bell, Deb Wakefield, Nancy Kraeuter, Marcia Garland, Gerry Colbert, Sandy Keller, Jean Lasater*, Wrenn Goodrum, Marsha Withers, Sandre Greene, Ed Pilkington, Steve Elrod.

Lights..... Thom Carveth, head
Ramona Hutton, ass't head
Tom Kenyon Frank O'Neill, Marta Schley*, Tim Morris, Dan Seaman, Genni Jennings, Bill Wagoner*, Ed Pilkington.

Costumes and Make-up..... Diane Rough
Bobby Bodford*, Cathy Harry*, Ruth Ann Phimister, Barbara Baker, Betsy Bailey.

Props.....Gunta Jankavs, head
Mary DeMartino, Susan Andrews*, Deb Austin.

Box Office and Publicity.....Cindy Lipe*, head
Wrenn Goodrum, Ruth Campbell, Adrienne Murfee, Kathy Garrity.

Sound..... Sue Atherton, head
Susan Andrews, consultant
John Morrow*

* Full Members of Masqueraders Drama Society